TRIUMPH

CHARLES FRANCIS COE

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The Undoing of Rafferty, Ward Heeler

BY

CHARLES FRANCIS COE

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ME GANGSTER, HOOCH,
SWAG, ETC.

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To

LEON ERROL

Genius in Laughter
and
Artist in Friendship
I Affectionately Dedicate
This Book

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TRIUMPH

CHAPTER I

"Talk big ... always big."

MY FIRST political pull came about in an unexpected way. It happened through Dan Rafferty. Dan has always been a pretty smart politician and though he has no education he seems to know just how to go about the political racket. He always makes friends but I never saw him do anything for anybody that cost Dan himself money.

I am not knocking Dan. In his own way he is a good fellow and you can lay your last dollar that he's an organization man from his heels to the top of his head. He plays the game every inch of the way with the big bosses and they know it and never have any fears about Dan. That is where he is wise. Besides, he has proved to me that he knows how to be a friend.

I guess the day has come when about everybody realizes that the office holders themselves have

mighty little to do with the government. On that account it will not do any harm for me to set down for you just the things that came to me after Dan Rafferty got me started working with the political organization.

Dan's faults were always plain to me, but his smile was a thing that kind of wrapped them up in velvet. He could smile his way through tough spots better than any man I ever met. He was always smiling and once, when I had done him a good trick, he got very fatherly and gave me good advice. We were sitting in Rourke's back room at the time. Dan used to protect Rourke and prohibition meant very little around the place.

"You can take it from me, Eddie," Dan told me, "politics ain't makin' speeches an' kiddin' voters. Not no more, it ain't. It's the old personality that counts. Why listen: There's men in the organization that has been educated in colleges and married in churches an' even now they don't know enough to see that it's all a laugh. Chumps, they are, Eddie. No actor is as funny plain as he is blacked up . . . you know that. Same with everythin' else. Go get yourself some gold teeth, Eddie, an' wear brighter clothes an' never speak about a big man except by his first name.

"When you buy a drink, make a lot of noise doing it. Wait till guys are around to see you pay.

If you spend ten bucks for coal for a widow, have somebody else finance a parade to celebrate it. Just be sure that the widow gets the coal.

"Talk big . . . always big. You can't talk too big. An' never do anything you don't have to do because everything you do may twist around later an' smack you cold. . . . Always keep close to the voters, too. Not once a year, at election time; not once a month either. Every day, Eddie. Politics is a business nowadays an' a feller's got to work at it."

You can see for yourself that Dan is pretty smart. He knows his onions all right.

He is a big fellow physically and in his day has been a good man in a saloon fight. I remember hearing that he got started in politics because he stood in the door of a voting booth and held off nine men that were drifting for the other side. That attracted the bosses' attention and he got himself on the ticket next year for constable.

It was easy enough to do that because nobody but a lion like Dan Rafferty wanted the constable job. In those days some of the merchants were just beginning to sell things on the dollar-down-dollar-when-you-catch-me plan and lots of the boys around the district were giving that racket a great play. They would pay a little down, then use the stuff and forget the weekly payments.

When the collectors came to take it away they

would bar the door and sue the merchant because the stuff was unsatisfactory or misrepresented. Their suit would be for a return of the down payment. Always when the trial came up the constable for the district had to serve summonses and such things on the guys in our district.

Knowing the guys in our district, I would just as soon have gone to the African jungle to serve tobacco to a herd of bull elephants. But it never fazed Dan. He took the nomination. Because nobody ran against him, he was elected. Right away he began taking fees for serving papers and then taking a bit more from the man he served for showing him the tricks of the law. He charged the merchant for serving the buyer, then on the same call, he sold the buyer a few tricks about beating the paper he served!

In three months he had an auctioneer working with him. Because he represented the law, he could do a lot of things and finally, after old Mike Glavin was elected a judge, they had it all their own way. Whatever Dan said went. His ideas were so good he was just naturally boss. If the store paid more than the customer, the store got the stuff. If the customer paid more, the judge saw to it that trial costs were too heavy for the amount involved and he would refuse to issue a writ of replevin. That stopped the merchant's prosecution.

In a year Dan was a popular guy and had made a lot of dough besides. Every time the customer won against the merchant Dan would let him set up a few drinks at Rourke's place and tell everybody what a hell of a fellow Dan was for the working man.

But telling you about Dan has got me ahead of the story. I feel like you ought to know Dan because later on you will hear a lot about him. Here is the way I got close to him and so into the political racket.

Every year the downtown organization financed an outing of THE RAFFERTY VOTERS LEAGUE. That was really the organization headquarters in our ward but Dan had sense enough, and power enough, to see that his name went over the door and he got credit for the outings.

When the time for the blow-out came along the whole ward would be steamed up. Dan would walk around the streets and smile and pass out cigars and tell where the beer for the outing was coming from and how much there was of it. Everybody thought he was paying for it just because he loved mankind.

I got to know Dan through his dealings with a man who ran a foundry in our ward. The foundryman was suddenly billed by the city for back taxes. He put up an awful howl. They laughed at him

downtown and talked about suing him and raising his assessed values just to teach him a lesson. He had never given anything for campaign funds but he finally went to Dan for help.

Dan chewed it all over, allowed he could fix the thing for about three hundred dollars to pass out downtown and there, because the foundryman paid, the matter might have ended had Dan not been so cute. But Dan was cute. He fixed it with the boss of the foundry to post a sign that none of his workers could have the day off to go to the Rafferty outing.

"An' stick to it," Dan instructed him, "until the boys come to me to do somethin' about it. We'll let it build up plenty an' then I'll drop around and make them think I fixed it with you to let 'em off. That'll pull votes my way when I need 'em an' you know, now, the value of havin' a feller like me fer your friend."

"But," said the poor bird who had been stuck for three centuries, "that'll turn all the men against me. I can't stand for that, Rafferty. God knows that outing costs me enough as it is. There ain't any work done at all the day of the blow-out and for the next two days all that is done is done wrong. There is too much beer on those outings.

"It's bad enough that way. But getting them sore on me would be the last straw. Can't we fix

it up some other way to get you the votes? I'd be willing to come out strong for you. . . ."

"No, no," Dan grinned, "you don't savvy this political racket. I'll see that it helps you more'n it hurts you in the end. I'll tell the boys you was forced into it against your will by a crowd tryin' to cause labor trouble here an' that I had to go way high up to get all of you out of a jam. Then you come to the outing an' you'll be better off'n ever before."

They worked it out that way and a week before the time for the outing, up went the sign. I was working in the foundry at the time. I was foreman of the cleaning floor. When they saw the sign, the fellows were pretty sore because they worked hard and it was always hot weather when the outing time came around. A day in the open with all the cool beer they could drink was a thing to be thought about a lot. It cost them not a dime.

When word of the sign went around among the boys, we were running through a series of steel castings that were built on a queer drawing number. The core markers had some kind of a trick they had to do that left a wide fin on one end of the casting and a gate on the other. In cleaning off the stuff for annealing and grinding, the boys had to go easy with the heavy hammers or they would bust off the neck of the casting itself.

Just as soon as that sign went up, necks began to crack off very easy. I knew something was wrong with the boys because they were a decent enough lot but nasty when you got them sore. The easiest thing in the world would have been to raise the devil with them and start a big blaze out of what was just smoldering. So I sat tight and said nothing. Back to the furnace went about fifty per cent of each pour off.

That did plenty to production costs and I knew it wouldn't be long before I was up on the mat with plenty to answer for. I hoped the boys would get over their anger before it went too far to explain, but they got worse. Finally I heard about the sign and I just about gave up hope. Once that afternoon I was ready to go in to the boss and tell him straight just what he was up against. But nobody ever gets anywhere telling his boss how wrong he is, so I sat tight.

It was near quitting time that night when the boss sent for me. I figured he was going over the timekeeper's reports and had caught up with the increased reject percentage. Everybody has to take guff now and then for something they didn't do, so I kept a close mouth and started for the office.

When I left the cleaning floor I stopped over at the water spigot for a drink. As I did that, the overhead crane that carried the castings from the

molder's floor to the cleaning floor, swung along overhead. If you know something about foundries you know that a chainman is pretty apt to ride with his chain. As a usual thing the boys would hook on a load of the castings, jump aboard and ride over the foundry to the cleaning floor. Then they would drop free there and unhook so the castings could be dumped.

I happened to notice that the chainman was not riding the load this time. He was running along the floor underneath. I looked up and saw the crane operator dancing his control lever so the crane worked in jerks. In no time at all the load of casting was swinging like a bird in a hammock. Then I heard the chainman holler:

"Stand clear, there, on the cleanin' floor. We're goin' to have our own outin' right here!"

My cleaners jumped clear and the crane operator, leaning out of his cab to time the whole thing, and wearing a wide and nasty grin, swung those castings like a cannon ball and let them drop so that they crashed hell-bent against the side of the brick annealing oven. I knew that all those castings were neckless and I never even stopped to see if the oven was ripped wide open.

Those ovens have to operate at a steady heat of anywhere from fourteen hundred to two thousand degrees and an open seam might mean thousands of

dollars in repairs because an oven goes out of commission during the work and cuts production plenty. Seeing that gave me sense enough to speak out in church and, queer as it may seem, that is the way I got into politics.

I went in to see the boss and instead of bawling me out for the breakage on the cleaning floor, he looked at me like I was his oldest friend.

"Eddie," he said, "hell's poppin' since I put up that sign about the Rafferty outing."

"I'll tell the cockeyed world it is!" I admitted right away. "You don't know the half of it, boss. I just seen a crane operator bang a load of them number twenty-four hundred B's against the south anneal oven hard enough to spread every seam she's got. The breakage on my floor has gone up a hundred per cent since that sign was hung!"

"I knew damned well I never should have done it," he growled. "It's a fine thing when a man has to bribe a lot of mick politicians and ruin his business for them as well!"

That remark did not register with me at all, then. All that I have told you, I learned later on. Just now the boss, it developed, was in worse trouble than broken casting necks and smashed annealing ovens. He was in wrong and I did not know how.

"Somebody set fire to the compressor house, Eddie," the boss went on, "and put the sand blast

rooms out of air for the next three hours. Castings'll pile up on the grinding floor and then back onto your floor and unless we get straight mighty quick we'll lose an oven heat just because we've got no place to pour off."

"If you want my advice," I said, "change that sign. Let the lads know that the Rafferty blow-out is goin' to be the same as always. Then the trouble'll stop."

The boss rubbed his chin briskly and his eyes got hot looking, but he shook his head finally and said: "I don't dare. Damned if I'm not afraid to do it! . . . Sounds crazy, but it's a fact. If I do, they'll be down on me for taxes that'll make my head swim. They've juggled the courts and the politicians and once let them go after me and I'll have to shut up shop or move!"

Not knowing anything about Rafferty at that time, I did not answer him. He rubbed his chin some more, scratched his ear and swore under his breath. I could see that he was burning up over something but I was not feeling any too good myself on account of the trouble on the cleaning floor, so I let the boss take the lead.

"Honest, Eddie," he went along after a minute, "this is the rottenest line-up I ever heard of."

"I don't know what you're talkin' about," I admitted, " but it's a cinch it ain't the cleanin' floor."

"That is bad enough, Lord knows," he growled. "You can melt five thousand dollars in one of those annealing ovens about as quick as you can cause a disturbance in church! But if that's all I had to worry about I'd be happy. It's this political ring that's botherin' me . . . Rafferty and his mob." He fairly spat out the last sentence.

"They billed me for back taxes about a month ago, then came around and stuck me up for three hundred dollars to get out of paying them. I could take my choice between paying the three hundred or going into court on the back tax thing, facing increased assessments and getting the police and fire departments so sore on me that I couldn't smoke a cigarette on the place, much less run an oven."

At the moment I was kind of relieved that the boss' troubles were so big he couldn't ride me for what was happening in the foundry. But it struck me as mighty funny that the boss would talk about playing along with Rafferty and his gang and then hang up this sign that caused all the trouble in the foundry.

"It looks to me, boss," I said, "as though you went right out and spit in a wildcat's eye when you put that sign up. Rafferty will be pretty sore about that. He gets a lot of votes out of them outin's and the boys all think he's a whale of a big guy."

"Don't be a jackass all your life," the boss

snarled back at me. "It's Rafferty himself that put the sign up! He'll make capital out of it. It's one of his fine schemes for advertising himself and his outing. By the time it's over, he'll look like a little tin god to every working man in the district. The men are really going to the outing all right, but Rafferty wants it to look as though I was forced to put up that sign so's to fight him here in the district.

"If this gang don't wreck the foundry before the truth comes out, Rafferty says he'll make himself, and me too, stronger than ever with the men."

I couldn't think of anything to say so I just kind of whistled and I guess I looked surprised because the boss rubbed his chin some more and drummed with his fingers on the table and finally, just because he was so full he had to talk to somebody, he went along:

"Rafferty hasn't got any investment in the foundry. What's he care if these fellows damage the place? He's got me where the hair is short, and he knows it. If I try to go after him all I'll do is run into Mike Glavin, the judge. I'll be thrown out of court and the fire and police departments'll be thrown into this place with regulations that'll drive me crazy."

As the boss talked along I could see he was pretty sore and pretty worried too and I began to wonder

why he had sent for me. I had never had anything to do with politics and I didn't know Rafferty as well as lots of other fellows in the plant. When the boss stopped a minute, I asked:

"What can I do? Where do I fit in the scheme? I'm workin' fer you and I'll do anything I can to help you, but I don't see . . ."

"No," the boss snapped, "you don't see, Eddie. You didn't see it was Rafferty made me put the sign up, either. There's a lot you don't see. But you can help me if you will."

"Sure I will," I said. I always kind of liked the boss.

"You hang around Rourke's place a good deal and that's quite a hang-out of the men from the foundry," the boss explained. "Dan Rafferty makes that a high spot for himself, too. What I want you to do is find some way to tip off the boys around Rourke's that everything is going to work out all right and not to do any damage around the place here. They'll all get their chance to go to the outing and drink their beer and raise all the hell they want to. If you can find a way to do that without letting Rafferty know . . ."

"What a chance!" I cut in. "Rafferty knows everything that happens in Rourke's joint. Him and Rourke play hand in glove. Ever since I been a kid ten years old, Rourke's place has never been

closed. In spite of prohibition, he's sellin' booze in there right now and every cop in the district knows it. He's a sure shot to play cozy with Dan Rafferty."

"Well, then," the boss said, his voice kind of high and strained, "go to Rafferty himself. Tell him what happened on the cleaning floor to-day, and in the sand blast. Make him see that something's got to be done to keep the boys quieted down. Get him to pull off his trick right away so that I can take that sign down to-morrow morning."

"All right, Boss," I said. "I'll see Rafferty and I'll do what I can with the fellows down at Rourke's to-night. But it looks to me like a tough job to make Dan Rafferty change his mind or make him work any way but the way he wants to work."

"You do what you can, Eddie," he urged me. "If you can break this thing up before it goes any farther, I'll find some way to square it with you."

So that was the way I had my first talk with Dan Rafferty.

I found him down at Rourke's that night, his gold teeth shining and his smile working overtime. He was sitting at a table with two or three molders from our place and Rourke was there, too. Dan had some sucker that he had brought in to buy drinks for the night.

I walked over to the table and Dan boomed hello to me in his heavy voice and stuck out his big hand and shook with me until I might have thought I was the only man on earth he cared about. He certainly was a smooth operator that way.

"Sit down, Eddie," he boomed. "Hey, Flat-foot, bring Eddie here a shot. Let's see if we can put a smile on his dial. I swear I never seen a feller had such trouble grinnin' as you, Eddie."

I sat down at the table and he slapped me on the back so hard I almost coughed. Everybody around the table was laughing with Rafferty. There was something about him that just kind of picked you up and swept you off your feet. I guess that is why he is a good politician.

I drank a glass of whisky and the sucker that Rafferty had brought in leaned across the table and looked at me. His eyes were kind of glassy. I found out afterwards he ran a little store down at the other end of the ward.

"Listen, Eddie," he said, his voice thick and a little uncertain, "don't go reachin' for your pocket now! I'm throwin' this little party to-night. Me an' Dan are old pals an' the drinks are on me. How 'bout it, Dan?"

"I'll tell the happy universe!" Dan boomed. "This is Jim Larnin, Eddie, an' a reg'lar guy, too, take it from me. There's nothin' in the world gives

me the kick that I get out a bringin' reg'lar fellers together."

"Thatta boy," Larnin said, taking a very deep breath.

Rafferty laughed out again and called the waiter. "We can't have Eddie drinkin' alone here," he said slapping me on the back again. "Eddie's the foreman of the cleanin' floor down at the foundry, an' a damned good guy, take it from Dan Rafferty. He's my friend, Eddie is, ain't you, Eddie?"

"Sure," I said, and darned if I didn't feel kind of proud of it.

Flatfoot brought over some more liquor and we tossed that off and finally Rourke himself caught fire. He banged on the table with his fist and said: "Bring a bottle over here, Flatfoot. With gents gathered around a table like this here one, they ain't got no time to waste waitin' fer a worn-out waiter with squeaky shoes to be bringin' 'em their liquor."

"Thatta boy," Larnin said again, his head kind of hanging to one side, "bring on the liquor."

Flatfoot looked toward the door and a worried look came over his face. He did not like the idea of setting liquor out in the open. Rafferty laughed out loud, and said: "Ain't I here? Set out the booze."

I just about gave up hope of getting a chance to talk turkey with Rafferty. He had a live one in this Larnin and he was spreading his wings like an eagle.

It was early and I knew that before long quite a crowd would be there. Larnin was too good a shot for Rafferty to miss out on. As the boys gathered, Rafferty would stage one of his real parties and give the bill to Larnin. That might keep Rafferty pretty busy.

So I decided to get to him just as quick as I could. I made an excuse about having a message for him and took him over into a corner.

"Listen here, Mr. Rafferty," I began.

"My name's Dan," he butted in. "Where'd you get that mister stuff, Eddie?"

"All right, Dan," I said. "But listen here: My boss is in a tough jam down at the foundry. He asked me to come here to-night and see what I could do about it with you. Just as soon as he put up that sign about not letting the boys off for your outing, everything went sour.

"Guys are throwin' castings around, crackin' up annealin' ovens and puttin' the sandblast out of commission just to show how they feel about it. The boss wants to play the game with you all right, Dan, but he wants to know if we can't tip the boys off in some way that everythin'll be all right later."

"How kin we?" Dan exploded. He raised his big hands, palms up as if to show me there wasn't a thing in the world to do about it. The back room was pretty well filled with smoke by this time and Dan's fingers were spread wide apart and I could see little threads of smoke twisting around his hands and in between his big fingers.

"Somethin's got to be done," I said. "Honest, Dan, they'll bust up that joint complete. . . ."

"There ain't nothin' we kin do, I tell you," Dan insisted. "That boss of yours got a damned lucky break when I fixed up that tax thing fer him. He don't know when he's well off. I got to figure on the unions around here. The molders and the core markers are organized an' I got to play up to them some. This is a chance to wave the flag plenty an' show the boys who their friend really is. It's too good a chance fer me to blow, Eddie."

I was thinking a whole lot because I had sense enough to see that this was a chance for me to get in right with the foundry boss. I guess that's when I first started in being a politician. If Dan Rafferty could go to all this trouble, and put everybody else to all this trouble, just to make a big fellow of himself, I figured I ought to do a little something on my own.

All of a sudden the best idea I ever had hit me

right between the eyes. It was simple enough but it just happened to come at the right time.

"Listen here, Dan," I said, "you're right on this thing, but I was just thinkin' maybe we could build it up even better. There might be a way to work everythin' out swell."

"How you goin' to build it up any better?" Dan asked . . . "It's a cinch your boss has been talkin' to you about the little plan we had."

"Sure he has," I said. "Now listen here: Suppose when the boys gather in here to-night I start talkin' about this sign out at the foundry and you pretend to be pretty sore about it. Then suppose you tell the gang that you know my boss pretty well and know him fer a regular guy that wouldn't do a thing like this unless he was forced into it. . . ."

"Where does that help me?" Dan cut in. "Why should I advertise your boss? He owes me plenty right now for what I done on that tax thing!"

"Sure," I agreed, "I guess he knows that all right. But listen here, Dan: You can do some heavy thinkin' fer the gang to-night an' finally spring a line about you bein' the only man alive that sees through this thing. After that you can make the fellows all think that somebody is ridin' my boss an' forced him into this sign hangin', but that you're big enough to bust up the scheme.

That'll make you bigger'n ever after the boss takes down the sign!"

As I talked, I saw Dan's face light up and though there was always a smile there it changed a little bit then and looked kind of real. I could see I was making headway with him.

"I hate to cuff your boss around," he muttered, hooking his thumbs into the armholes of his vest. "He's a pretty good guy and I didn't think we'd make quite so much trouble with that sign."

"Well," I said, "you can tell the boys to lay off any rough stuff till you have a couple of days to work. Get them to promise that here to-night and that'll make a big guy out of you because they'll think for two days about how you are workin' for them.

"Then, in a couple of days, I'll get my boss to come down here and throw a party like Larnin is to-night. We can take the sign down and tell the boys the outin' is on and that the foundry boss is their friend and meant right by them all the time. That way we can make it look great because the boys will see all the pull you have got and we can square the boss with them as well."

Dan rocked back and forth on his heels and toes and kind of chewed the inside of his lips like he was doing some heavy thinking. I could see that the idea set pretty well with him. At last he said:

"That ain't a bad hunch, Eddie. . . . I don't see why you're wastin' your time on a cleanin' floor!"

I didn't answer him and he rocked some more; finally unhooked his right thumb and lowered his hand until he played with a gold watch chain which hung across his vest. I took out a cigarette and lit it and offered him one.

"No, thanks," he said. "No. I don't want any coffin nails. . . . Here," he finished suddenly, reaching into his vest pocket, "smoke a cigar, Eddie. You and me'll get along."

I threw away the cigarette and as Dan and me walked over to the table we were both puffing cigars and he whispered to me:

"Wait till a good big crowd gets in here, then start talkin' about that sign."

"Sure," I nodded and we sat down at the table and had some more to drink. The fellows began to gather in the room.

There was a certain kind of feeling about Rourke's place that seemed to satisfy the gang. You could go in there in a flannel shirt and if your shoes were not shined that didn't make any difference either. For two or three dollars you could get in with the boys and buy when your turn came. That way you could have a pretty good time before the night was over, and have it cheap. All the boys

knew that but when Rafferty was around they knew they wouldn't have to do as much spending as usual and they would get more to drink. That was why they always gathered when word went around that Dan was spreading his wings.

Just as soon as they got a few drinks that night they began telling Rafferty about the sign. He pretended to be surprised. I didn't say anything because I wanted to wait until everybody possible was there.

Larnin got pretty drunk. All he did was pay for drinks and try hard not to fall off his chair. The cop from the beat came in and had a couple of hookers. Rafferty talked very big about what he would say to the captain of the precinct if any kick went in about the noise we made.

When things got rolling good, I slipped across the street and called my boss on the telephone. I felt pretty good over what I had done and when I told the boss he said:

"That's great work, Eddie. That looks like an easy way out. You tell Rafferty I'll go the limit on throwing a party at Rourke's place day after to-morrow night. And be sure to have him tell the boys on the square that I'm a good fellow and to lay off me till we're able to see just how this thing works out."

When I got back to Rourke's, I figured I didn't

need to worry much about the next day's work at the foundry. After doing the boss as big a favor as I had, I thought he ought to play the game with me. So I went for Larnin's bank roll like the rest of them did. We all got pretty drunk and when the biggest crowd was there I put the proposition to Dan Rafferty. He promised to get to the bottom of things and defend the rights of his friends. The boys agreed to lay low until he had a chance to work.

The result was that we broke up about two o'clock in the morning, everybody feeling good and trouble at the foundry stopped while Dan was working to fix things. I went home that night feeling swell because I figured I had put myself in solid on my job at the foundry.

But I know now that what I really did that night in Rourke's back room was to get myself into politics.

CHAPTER II

"What's a mayor, or a judge, or a senator, or an alderman?"

DURING the outing I got closer than ever to Dan Rafferty. Of course he was pretty busy that day but there were lots of little things about the beer and the ice and the food that needed looking after. He asked me to help him on that.

The outing was held on Blackberry Island and we went down the river on a big tugboat belonging to Patrick Sweeney. Sweeney ran a towing corporation and had about eight or ten tugs and twenty or thirty barges. He was a big shot in the downtown organization. He always furnished a tugboat to take the men to Rafferty's blow-out.

The night before, we all gathered again at Rourke's place and Dan asked me to be down at the dock early the next morning to see that everything went along all right.

"Put the ice in the stern of the tug," he told me,

"an' fix it so we can lay six barrels of beer right on the cakes. The captain of the tug'll have some canvas to spread over the ice an' the kegs an' that'll keep the sun from gettin' at 'em.

"There'll be three washtubs down there loaded with steins. See that these are filled up with cracked ice spread around over the steins so that the boys can have their beer cold. An' you wanna be sure to see that all six barrels are tapped.

"Find a place back there on the after deck to put the sandwiches so the boys can eat while they drink. See that everything's opened up, Eddie, so that nobody has to do nothin' but help themselves. This is a Dan Rafferty blow-out an' she's got to run true to form."

I promised to go down there early and do what I could. I felt a little proud that Dan had picked me out for such a job. With my boss from the foundry going along and Dan himself there I felt like I was getting a pretty solid pull all around.

"There won't be any jam about the booze, Dan?" I asked him. "I see the mayor's goin' to show up, and Judge Glavin'll be there, along with a couple of State senators. O'Hoole, the alderman, says he's goin' along and goin' to take the police captain an' inspector of this district. I'd hate fer to get in a jam about loadin' that booze. . . . These Federal guys, you know . . ."

Dan threw back his head and laughed his heavy laugh. "Gee," he grinned at me, "you're a babe in the woods. What's a mayor, or a judge, or a senator, or an alderman? Don't you think they like a little beer now an' then? Ain't they human? Anyway, who'd try to bust up a Dan Rafferty racket? Local or Federal, they're all the same to me! You go on down there and get that boat ready. If any mayors or police inspectors show up an' start askin' questions, hand 'em a sandwich an' a stein an' tell 'em to eat an' drink till Dan Rafferty shows up."

I was at the dock about six o'clock and about six thirty the ice showed up and I got that stowed away like Dan said. The boat was due to start at eight o'clock so we'd have all day at the Island.

About seven thirty, a whole truck load of beer showed up on the docks and lots of the fellows who were there early helped the driver to unload the kegs and roll them down the docks onto the boat. Dan saw to it that three or four cops were there to keep outsiders away and just as soon as I had the first keg tapped, I called the cops aboard and gave them all the beer they could drink. That put us in solid with them.

Dan never showed up till half-past eight. He drove up in a big limousine with a flag flying on the front of it. I saw the Mayor was inside with him.

I knew the Mayor from his pictures. Everybody stood around and cheered Dan and the Mayor. Right away the alderman and the senators and other politicians showed up just as though they had followed the Mayor and Dan to the docks.

I recognized the police inspector. He came aboard in civilian clothes and walked over to me and said:

"How's the beer?"

"It's great, Inspector," I told him. "Mebbe it'll be a little better when it gets colder. Wanna try some?"

"I guess I will," the inspector said. "Y'know you can make beer flat if you get it too cold. Since prohibition we've kinda forgot how to drink beer. It ought to be just nice an' cool to get a head on it."

He held out his stein and I filled it. I just let it run, thinking to myself that if he wanted a head on his beer he would get it that way. He did. It foamed up over the top of the stein and flowed over the sides ond spattered on the deck of the boat.

"Hot damn!" the inspector said. "Cast a winker on that stuff, eh, boy?" Everybody laughed. "Beer like this is hard to get these days," he finished.

"It's real stuff," I said.

He raised up his stein and blew the foam off the top of it so it spattered all over the canvas covering the kegs.

Lots of men standing around laughed some more and the inspector shook his head and said, "Gee! I thought I'd forgot how to do that." Then he raised his stein. "Three cheers for the best Mayor this town ever had," he shouted. The boys all cheered very loud.

The Mayor, who was just coming over the side, took off his hat and waved it over his head. When the cheering was finished, the inspector hollered, "Hey, Tom, come on over here and be a regular guy. You ain't in the city hall now. Throw a lip over this."

Everybody laughed and the Mayor came over to the beer and I poured him one and he and the inspector clicked glasses.

"Well," the Mayor said, "down the hatch, kid!"

They lapped up those steins plenty quick. When I started to refill them the Mayor said, "That beer will be colder after a while and much better. Warm beer always bloats me all up."

Then Dan Rafferty joined us and he got the Mayor by the arm and walked him forward. Everybody was laughing and shouting. Finally one of the molders found the sandwiches. Just as the Mayor and Dan passed along the side deck, he reached up

from the boxes of sandwiches and caught the Mayor by the arm.

"Come on, Tom," he said to the Mayor, "You ain't in the city hall now. Be a reg'lar guy. Throw back your ears." He held out a sandwich to the Mayor and, as I said, he was a molder and never went in very much for manicuring. But the Mayor was a good guy and took the sandwich and slapped the molder on the shoulder and said:

"You're damned right! I am with regular guys, and don't I know it, too! How about it, Dan?" His voice was pitched loud so we all could hear.

The molder called for three cheers for the Mayor and everybody shouted some more. While that cheering was going on the whistle on the tug blew and a greasy looking guy climbed up over the beer kegs to cast off the stern line. I saw the Mayor drop his sandwich over the side into the river.

Just at that moment I got another good idea and when the whistle had quit blowing and the cheers for the Mayor had died down, I hollered out:

"What about the guy givin' this outing? How about three cheers for Dan Rafferty?"

It was a good idea, all right. The fellows got so enthusiastic in their cheers that they waved their beer and the foam spattered all over the deck and made it very slippery. As the tug pulled away

from the dock, the cops stood there and waved at us.

Just about that time I saw my boss at the foundry standing by himself up near the pile of sandwiches. I reached down and filled two steins with beer and carried them over to him. There's something about an outing like that, especially a Rafferty outing, which makes everybody look alike. So I said:

"What the hell, boss! Don't be standing there like you were dead from the neck up. This is a picnic. It ain't no funeral. Here, toss this into you. There's forty ideas in every stein of this beer and I'm telling you right now you're going to need a lot to keep pace with this outfit to-day."

He grinned and took the stein and said, "All right, Eddie. Let 'er shoot. How do the boys feel toward me now?"

"Great," I said, licking the foam off my lips. "Ever since the Mayor got a chance to work. You're in right now."

I'm glad to hear that," he muttered, half to himself. He smiled a little and then finished up the stein of beer. "It's good," he said.

I took him by the arm. "Come on over by the kegs, boss. Mix in with the boys a little bit. Let 'em find out you're human," I said.

So we walked across the deck and the boss slipped in the foam there and pretty near went down. All

the molders and core markers and cleaners and grinders and sand blasters from the foundry got a big laugh out of that.

The boss wasn't such a fool, though. Right away he caught hold of a fellow who was at the nearest keg and pushed him aside and turned to the mob and said:

"Come on, line up. I'm the bartender."

That made a big hit with the boys and I stood there and the boss took the steins from each man and filled them and handed them back.

Up on the topside of the tug somebody started to sing "Sweet Adeline."

"Let's go up topside, boss," I said. "I think the Mayor's up there."

So we worked our way through the crowd and went up to where the politicians were all standing around drinking beer, munching sandwiches and singing "Sweet Adeline."

The boss and me joined in the circle and we sang, too. Some fellow had a pretty good voice and he started singing, "There's a long, long trail . . ." I don't know whether it was sentiment or beer but everybody huddled close together and put their arms around each other and started to harmonize. It was pretty lousy music but they liked it fine.

Right in the middle of the song some fellow found the tug whistle cord and pulled it all the

way down. That broke up the choir because you couldn't hear the singing and we all got soaking wet by condensed steam.

I left the boss talking with the Mayor and went down below again. On the lower deck I met the police inspector. He was having an argument with some fellow I never saw before, about some cop that had been transferred from his regular beat out to the sticks.

The stranger said: "He's a regular guy, Inspector. Everybody makes a mistake now an' then. He's pretty cozy with Rafferty an' you're bound to hear of it from Dan pretty soon, so I thought I might just tip you off an' mebbe you could get this bird back on the job without causin' Dan no trouble."

"I can't be moving men around whenever I happen to think of it," the inspector complained. "I get my orders, too. This cop never should've made that pinch. He must've been soused when he did it. But I'll look into it and see what I can do about it." I could see that politicians never stop working and I realized from this conversation that they are always being asked to do things for people.

I passed them and just as I did somebody reached down from the top deck, lifted up the inspector's straw hat and shied it right out into the middle of the river. Everybody saw a lot of humor in that

so the inspector couldn't get very sore. He just reached over and took this stranger's hat and threw it after his own. Then they both swore at each other in a friendly way and locked arms and went back to the beer kegs.

Pretty soon two of the beer kegs on ice were empty and there was a terrible squawk from the gang around them. The first thing I knew Rafferty was hollering for me.

"Eddie," he said, "you're the manager of this outfit, an' you're a reg'lar little diplomat. From the minute you met me your future began to git brighter an' brighter. See that them beer kegs is fixed up fer the boys."

Well, everybody heard him say that and two or three of the fellows came over and told me I was getting a break in the luck. One of them said:

"Any guy that can get the Mayor of this town off on a party like this has got a lot of pull. He's a good guy to know. It's easy to see Dan likes you an' if I was you I'd play pretty cozy with him."

So I did that. I watched everything on the boat and when the sandwiches ran out I had more boxes opened. I kept full kegs on the ice.

"Things is goin' along great," Rafferty said. "This is a day nobody'll ever forget." That pleased me because I could see Dan was pleased.

We reached the Island about ten o'clock and

most of us got into bathing suits and went over and had a swim. We had a great time until, just about noon, they served the big feed. Everybody ate lobster and chicken and clams and fish and sweet potatoes until their eyes bulged.

While we were sitting down at rough wooden tables packing in the chow, the inspector got very sentimental and cried a lot and sang "Mother Machree" for us. Finally he made such a fine speech that he passed out at the end of it and we spread him out in the shade of a bush.

It certainly was great to get to know these big men like I was getting to know them. The Mayor was calling me Eddie and I was calling him Tom. Once I saw Dan and Tom together and I went over to them and said:

"Dan, how was that chow served?"

"Great," Dan told me. "How about it, Tom? Was that a feed for the kings?"

The Mayor hiccoughed and said, "It sure was." He seemed to have that habit of hiccoughing a lot and I noticed that he was breathing deeply and blowing the air hard through his lips.

Dan put one of his arms around the Mayor's shoulder and the other around mine and pulled us close together. He spoke kind of confidential:

"Eddie here," he explained to the Mayor, "is a foreman down at the foundry. All the boys know

him and he's got a pretty fair sorta head on his shoulders. I figger we might use him a little later on, Tom. He's the kind of a feller we need."

Between hiccoughs the Mayor said he thought that was a great idea. They certainly did not get any complaints out of me about it.

Dan and the Mayor brought out baseball gear at three o'clock. They tossed a bat between them for first choice of players. That way they chose up sides. The game was to be one of the day's big features. It started out with a senator as umpire.

The first man up to bat was Dan Rafferty. Just by luck he hit the ball right at the Mayor. The Mayor had a terrible time to keep from being hurt and Dan got to first base.

It was hot and Dan was all tired out by the time he had run that far so he called for a glass of beer. That gave the senator the idea of putting a keg of beer at first base and giving every man who made a hit a drink of beer as a reward.

The Mayor's team never did get to bat and we never did score a run. Once there were seven men on first base. But everybody was laughing and having a good time.

Everybody seemed to me to be the best of friends and I never caught any sign of trouble at all. Of course, I was pretty busy and not watching too close.

Anyway, while everybody was milling around

first base and shouting and laughing and drinking beer, the senator went over and called all but one of them out.

First thing we knew, one of the boys took it to heart and pasted the senator on the eye.

It would have been a great day even at that and I would have laughed it off just like everybody else except that just as we got the tug turned around and started toward the city, Rafferty came to me. There was no smile on his face. He took me by the arm and led me inside the engine room hatch. I could see he was pretty mad and a little bit worried.

"That fight, Eddie," he whispered, "that wasn't no sudden thing. Nobody's kiddin' Dan Rafferty about that. The feller that socked the senator is tied right in with Freddy Creedon, an' I guess you know who Freddy Creedon is!"

Well, I didn't know who Freddy Creedon was, but I had heard people speak about him once or twice. I just looked at Dan and he made it plain who this Creedon was.

"He's head o' the Blues, Eddie, that's what he is. An' the feller that socked the senator was planted on this party by Freddy Creedon. It'll be a swell thing to have the senator from our district come home from Dan Rafferty's party with a shantied eye, won't it?"

Dan seemed about ready to explode and he gripped my arm pretty hard in his big fingers.

"I had a hunch there was somethin' doin'," he muttered. "Creedon is makin' a play to steal the district away from us. Before he's through with it, he'll find out what fight is!

"You meet me in Rourke's place to-night at nine o'clock. We'll fix up a little deal that won't do you no hurt. . . . An' we'll teach Freddy Creedon and his gang who is boss in Dan Rafferty's district. I've seen this fight workin' up for two years an' there's no sense waitin' any longer to start it."

"All right," I said, "I'll see you in Rourke's at nine o'clock, Dan."

"I'm your friend, Eddie," he said, after a minute, "an' I can depend on you, can't I?"

Just at that time it seemed to me I got the hot smell of the cleaning floor again; felt my nose filled with the dust of molding sand, the breath of annealing ovens. My ears, after a day in the open, seemed filled again with the roar of grinders and sand blasters.

"I'll tell the cockeyed world you can!" I told Dan. "I don't see why I can't be a politician as well as anybody else."

"You can," he snapped, hitting me a crack between the shoulders, "an' by the Lord Harry," he finished, "you will!"

CHAPTER III

"Me an' Dan are pretty good friends."

ROURKE'S place was kind of quiet that night. It was a good thing. Most of the fellows that hung out in the back room had been on the outing and most of them were in no mind to show up at Rourke's or any other place.

"I guess most of the guys is in the chicken whiskers," Flatfoot said to me when I went in. "You must've had some day of it."

"I guess they are," I said. "It was some outin'."

"Even the Mayor was there, wasn't he?" he asked.

"Yeah," I drawled, feeling kind of important. "Tom was there for a little while."

"You're pretty smart at that, ain't you, Eddie?" he grinned. "I got it straight that the Mayor had a nice snootful."

I shrugged my shoulders. "He didn't look like a source to me," I grunted. "You can always hear rumors like that. . . . Is Dan Rafferty around?"

"Is Dan Rafferty comin' in?" he asked.

"I got a date here with him," I said feeling kind of important again.

"How is it you stayed sober?" he wanted to know.

"I was chief cook and bottle washer. Every time anybody started anythin' I had to finish it. Dan put it up to me to keep the beer flowin' and things goin' right."

"You an' Dan are gettin' pretty cozy, ain't you?" he grinned. I looked up just in time to see him wink slyly and that made me feel important, too, because Dan is quite a guy.

"Oh," I said, kind of careless, "me an' Dan are pretty good friends."

The place was very quiet and Flatfoot stood around the table like he was anxious to talk with me just to pass the time away. I wasn't so strong for that because a good idea would have fractured this bird's skull and I wanted to do some heavy thinking about what I would say to Dan.

What he had said to me on the tug about Freddy Creedon and the Blues was sticking in my mind. I remembered once a long time ago when I was just a kid there had been a political fight in our ward, and I heard my father say that three or four fellows had been killed and lots of others had been banged up plenty on Election day.

I have learned since that, next to religion, politics makes people fight harder than any other one thing on earth.

The way Dan had spoken to me aboard the tug made me think that perhaps another big fight was brewing up in the ward. The Blues called themselves a Social Club and they had some kind of rooms down in the third precinct where they used to get together nights.

Creedon paid the rent and furnished the boys with a pool table. He was in the billiard room business and had made a good thing of it. It was easy to see that he was beginning to get political ambitions.

My guess was that he wanted to be bigger than he could be with Dan Rafferty around and maybe now he was trying to make a move to get rid of Dan. Nobody knew better than me what a fight he would have on his hands.

So I didn't want to talk much with Flatfoot. I wanted to do a lot of thinking and I promised myself right there that if Dan Rafferty made me a proposition to play along with him and get off that cleaning floor, I was just about to become a politician.

It got to be about twenty minutes of ten before Dan came in. He walked through the swinging doors like an elephant through reeds. He saw me right away and I stood up. His eyes just roved

about the place; he grunted at Flatfoot, then walked over and dropped into a chair beside my table.

"Hello, Eddie," he said kind of solemn. "Sorry I'm late."

"That's all right, Dan," I said.

We sat down at the table and after a minute, I said: "What do you want of me, Dan?"

I could see a whole lot was on his mind.

"I want you to line up that foundry gang, Eddie," he told me. "First off, though, I want you to go to your boss an' put the bee on him fer five hundred bucks. Tell him to charge it up to fixin' the roof an' to hand it over in cash. If he gets nasty about it, put the screws on him."

As he spoke, Dan's voice grew hard and matched the light of his eyes. There was fire in both. I guess I looked surprised because he laughed with the ringing note of fine, snapped steel, and went on:

"Tell him he'll kick in or we'll start enforcin' a few fire regulations around that dump of his that'll make him wish the place'd burn down!

"You can tell him fer me that it'd cost him more'n five hundred bucks to fire-escape the office buildin' alone. . . . An' he's got those heat ovens of his built too high inside the plant. Hand him a pencil an' ask him what five hundred would do toward raisin' his roof a little bit, or puttin' in new steel construction. If that don't seem to do the

trick, ask him what it'd cost him to conduit every electric wire in his joint an' see that the conduits are four inches away from the walls. . . .

"I could tell him a few more things, too, but I guess that's enough. He'll kick in all right. I don't want to be nasty about this an' you can tell him fer me that we'll find a way later on to make it up to him.

"We'll use the five hundred to get somethin' on Creedon. If I have to, I'll fix it with some of my friends to send in a complaint on his damn billiard room as a common nuisance. Then I'll put the clamps on Glavin an' the inspector so that Mike'll issue an order to close the dump, an' the inspector'll see that it's closed. . . .

"After that I want you to line up the fellers at the foundry. You can tell 'em fer me that I'm their friend an' we'll blame Creedon fer stickin' that sign up about the outin', an' work it so we'll turn the unions against him. I'll fix it fer the alderman to make a statement to the papers in which it'll look like Creedon's against organized labor an' workin' toward the open shop. You can build that up with the boys out at the foundry.

"Now, Eddie, you get the five hundred from the boss an' spread this stuff around about Creedon among the fellers at the foundry. If you do that job right I'll have plenty more fer you to do, an'

you're workin' on twenty per cent. Just as soon as you shake the boss fer five hundred, one hundred of it goes to you. That's a damn sight better'n hammerin' castin's in a foundry!"

"I'll tell the cockeyed world it is," I said. "I'm for you, Dan. I'll see the boss in the mornin' and work on him the way you say."

Dan smiled a little bit. "Well," he said, "I kind of figgered you'd go fer this, Eddie, an' I'm tellin' you right now I never went back on a friend. There ain't anybody in this ward big enough to lick Dan Rafferty. You an' me'll show Freddy Creedon that the ward organization here can burn hotter'n any part of hell he ever heard of!"

"I'm fer that, Dan," I told him. "I'll see the boss in the mornin' an' be as gentle as I know how. But I guess I can chisel the five hundred out of him all right."

"He's got to pay," Dan cut in. "What the hell, there's got to be some kind of government! He might better play with us than with Creedon. If Creedon ever gets in he'll burn your boss worse'n this.

"The silk stockin' outfit is hot after the Mayor an' they always look on us down in this ward as a flock of dock walloppers, drunkards an' gutter lice. If Creedon's smart enough he could get plenty from the silk stockin' crowd on the other side of town

an' he might come into this ward an' cause us lots of trouble."

"Why don't you see Tom an' fix somethin' with him?" I suggested. Even as I said it it sounded a little vague but I felt like I ought to say something.

"Tom'll be havin' troubles of his own," Dan snapped. "Our organization's always carried this side of town an' we drag enough votes along to beat the highbrows on the other side. This ain't the first time somebody's tried to bust up our control here an' the silk stockin's 're ready to play cozy with anybody that's got any strength down here.

"Not only because every vote they get here counts double, because it takes one away from the organization man an' gives it to them, but also because strength down here for an opposition candidate doubles his strength everywhere else in town. It gives him a real chance to win. This is a key ward, Eddie.

"Fer that reason, Creedon if he makes any showin' down here at all, can expect a lot of help. We won't be fightin' just Creedon, we'll be fightin' the whole town."

"Well," I said, "the Mayor ought to see that. He ought to do somethin'. He's a big guy."

"Big, hell!" Dan grunted. "One of the lessons you got to learn if you're gonna be a politician, Eddie, is that you can't depend on a man when

he's runnin' fer office. Don't get me wrong. Tom's a good guy an' all right, but you just show him a chance to be licked as an organization man an' he'll flop about as quick as any fish you ever dragged out of water."

I was thinking a lot about the soft one hundred dollars I would pick up the next day and I could see that Dan would not give me this chance if he did not have other chances in mind. I did not think much about whether it was honest or not to get the money that way. I guess I just figured it was legal and Dan knew what he was doing when he went after such things.

Any way the cat jumped it seemed a good break for me. Even if Dan lost his fight with Creedon and I found myself out of a job and out of politics, too, I figured I would be no worse off because it's never very hard for a man with experience in a foundry to tie up to a job as good as I had then.

"Well, Eddie," he said, "I'm certainly strong for you an' I figger you're strong for me. Between the two of us we can do a lot around this ward."

"Oh, sure," I said. "I'll play the game for you, Dan."

"You won't lose nothin' by it," he mumbled. His big fingers drummed on the table. "You get that five hundred in the mornin'," he said at last, "an' then see me at my office."

Dan operated an insurance office and got a lot of business through his political connections. In fact, he got so much business and had so much influence around that they elected him a director of the River Trust Company. That helped him quite a lot politically because lots of times he steered through mortgages for people on homes and buildings.

"I'll be there before noon," I promised.

"The best thing both of us can do now, Eddie," he told me then, "is to hit the hay. You go through with this plan first thing in the mornin' an' I'll expect to see you before noon. If the outin' didn't do one other thing, it woke me up to just how far Creedon is ready to go. Unless I miss my guess it's got you started in politics so that you'll have a chance to make somethin' of yourself."

He stood up as he spoke and fixed the back of his coat collar where it was wrinkled up. His linen collar was pretty well wilted and his tie was twisted around so that the lining and the seam on the inner side showed. That was unusual with Dan because even if he was a little fat, he was always pretty careful about his clothes.

"T'-morrow's another day, Eddie," he finished up. Then, without shaking hands or saying good night, he turned and walked out past the bar and through the swinging doors. He certainly had wide

shoulders. There was something about the way he walked that seemed to cover up what fat he had and make his clothes look as though they were hung over big muscles that moved easily and seemed to kind of flow with strength. Some guy, Dan.

I started to go out the side way and Flatfoot was at the door. He grinned at me. His teeth were green at the gums and he had hair in his ears. I never seemed to notice that before but now that I was getting into politics I noticed people closer, and kind of sized them up for what they were worth.

"You and him are certainly playin' cozy all right," Flatfoot said to me. As he spoke he rubbed his hands together in front of his white apron. He grinned and his teeth looked greener than ever. He did not wear a coat or a vest, just a white shirt that was not too white, and this white apron tied around his neck and waist. But even on that white shirt, around the collar, I could see dandruff.

"It's a good break fer you," he whined, "an' fer one, I'm mighty glad to see you git it, Eddie. I s'pose you'll be runnin' fer alderman or somethin' like that before long."

"Yeah," I said, "it's a good break, I guess. I like Dan. He likes me, too. But what the hell'd I be doing running fer alderman? G'night. . . ."

"G'night, Eddie, g'night," he answered me. "Good luck to you, old pal."

I grunted at him and went out but when I got outside I felt pretty swell because already guys were beginning to show me the respect I deserved.

Outside the night was sticky and hot. I was pretty tired from the outing but I was too excited to think a whole lot about sleep. If it had been nice and cool with plenty of air stirring, then I would have gone to bed.

I just lived in a rooming house then and there was only one window in my room. That looked out onto a court. One story below my window was a tar and gravel roof and that used to get pretty hot on days like this. Sometimes it would be two or three o'clock in the morning before it would cool off and stop cooking the smells of the tenement houses that surrounded the court.

I could picture myself rolling around on a damp, hot bed trying to sleep while my mind was full of thoughts about politics and easy money, and my nose filled with the heavy smells that stayed around for hours after the foreigners on the block behind me had cooked their suppers.

I walked slowly up the side street and stood there on the corner outside Rourke's place. Under the yellow light that stood on the next corner I saw Dan Rafferty walking along the street. He was swinging along at a pretty fast gait for such a hot night. He had taken his hat off and was carrying

it in his left hand. I could see him swinging it back and forth as he walked.

He passed under the circle of light from the lamp and I saw him fade kind of slowly into the shadows of the next block. Somehow he looked different than I had ever seen him look before. For a minute it seemed almost as though it couldn't be Dan, but there was nobody else in the block and I had just left him.

I knew that he was walking toward his home and that it must be Dan. Anyway, you never could go wrong on his big figure. It was Dan all right. And even after the shadows had swallowed him up and the sound of his heels on the sidewalk had drifted out of my hearing, I kept looking after him.

I stood there and lit a cigarette, scratching the match on the brick wall of Rourke's place. Flatfoot came to the front window of the saloon and put out one of the lights. It was a pretty quiet night following the outing. Then I looked back again in the direction Dan had gone. I kept wondering what made him look so different. All of a sudden I realized. That was the first time in my life I had ever seen Dan Rafferty all alone.

CHAPTER IV

"She's a nice girl . . . a mighty nice girl."

THE next morning when I got up I did not get into my work clothes at all. In fact, I put on the best suit I had. I figured to walk out to the foundry and let the boss see at a glance what would take me a long time to explain to him.

I figured that I would go right to his office and just kind of ease in and give him a flash at me all dressed up. Then I would not have to tell him I was not there for work. That would make things easier.

I got out to the plant about ten o'clock and there was about as much activity out there as there is in the choir room of a country church on any morning at half-past three. Even the ovens were running at low temperature and I could see that there would be no pour off that day. The watchman at the gate grinned at me when I went in.

"Workin' men are as scarce around here," he said, "as doughnuts at a Rockefeller banquet. That Rafferty outin' gummed the works."

"Is the big boss here?" I asked.

"Yeah, he's in his office." Then he looked me over and he said, "Gee, Eddie, are you quittin', or gettin' married or somethin'?"

I just waved my hand at him and walked on toward the office. I looked through the glass partitions and saw the boss in his private office looking over some papers. The office force was there; the typewriters were clattering pretty fast. I said to the little blonde at the information desk:

"Tell the boss I'd like to chin with him a minute, will you?"

She smiled and started toward the boss' office, but just then he looked up and saw me standing there waiting and a funny look came over his face. He raised his hand and motioned to me.

"Never mind," I said to the blonde as I trailed along after her. "He seen me an' he's callin' me in."

She did a column left and I went right in on the green carpet and said:

"Good mornin', boss." I had my hat in my hand and I tossed it up on the corner of his desk just to let him see where I stood.

"Good morning, Eddie," he said, his hands rest-

ing on the papers in front of him and his eyes turned right on me with the eyebrows lifted up so that his forehead wrinkled. "What's the big idea? Didn't any of the boys show up at all? Haven't you got anybody to work?"

"I got other things beside work on my chest this mornin', boss. Things are goin' pretty bad around here politically."

"What the hell do you know about politics?" he grinned at me. "Since you talked twice to Dan Rafferty, your chest is swelling out so you won't have a button on your vest."

"That's all right," I said. "I know what I'm doin' an' so does Dan. This political situation has got to be fixed up."

The boss threw back his head and laughed. It was kind of a dirty laugh. It made me a little sore.

"Before I'm done you'll find out I'm right," I snapped at him. "Me an' Dan had a long talk last night and certain things has got to be pulled off right away."

He stopped laughing and looked at me a little puzzled. "Certain things?" he asked. "What do you mean, certain things?"

"Well," I answered, a little uncertain now that I was right out in the front line and working entirely on my own, "certain people are trying to make trouble down here. If it comes to a political

fight, you'll have plenty of trouble with unions . . . an' about everything else!"

"What do you mean, trouble with unions?" he repeated.

"Well," I growled, "what would I mean when I say trouble with unions? The boys are goin' to get sore again. Certain people are comin' into this district to try an' break up the unions."

"Bunk!" the boss snapped.

"Well," I said, "I'm only tryin' to tell you." I tried to act like I was careless about it. Five hundred seemed a lot of money now that I was away from Dan. I began to wonder if he wouldn't be satisfied with two fifty. Fifty would satisfy me all right.

"What's Rafferty been saying to you?" the boss wanted to know.

"It ain't only Rafferty," I said. "Dan is the political boss around here and he knows what's goin' on. You seen for yourself yesterday who he's in with."

"I've seen that for a long time," the boss grumbled. I did not like the way he said it.

"Well," I went on, "it ain't only Dan. There's got to be some kind of government and fellers like you that has money an' get a lot of consideration from the government has got to take the responsibility of keepin' it goin'."

"A lot I get from the government!" the boss exploded. He stood up and pounded his hand on his desk so hard that some of the people outside the glass partition turned their heads and looked in. I figured they all thought I was getting a bawling out and just to show them where I stood, I planked my hand down on the desk, too, and I leaned across and looked the boss square in the eye. I said to him:

"You'll get a hell of a lot from the government that you don't expect if certain people get away with things in this ward!" For half a second I thought he was going to hit me with a paper weight and fire me off the lot. But pretty quick he bit his lips and looked at me and said:

"Well, sit down, Eddie. I know you mean all right."

He sat down and so I took a chair across the desk from him.

"I don't want no trouble, boss," I said, "but I'm in a position to know what's goin' on around here. I think enough of what I know so that I'm quittin' my job here in the foundry an' goin' out to work fer the boys."

That was the first political speech I ever made. When I boasted about it to Dan later on he looked at me a minute and laughed and said:

"What the blazes! That's the first one ever

made . . . and the last one, too! In whatever you say, Eddie, always be very strong fer the workin' man."

Anyway, it seemed to register with the boss because he scratched his ear and drummed on the table and moved the papers in front of him. Finally he opened a drawer in his desk and said:

"Do you want a cigar, Eddie?"

I took a cigar and lit it up. It was a good smoke but kind of hot and made my throat feel dry. I took a flash through the glass partitions at some of the wise, white-collar birds that had been looking at me. They showed their surprise at me sitting in there smoking the boss' cigars.

"So you are going to throw up your job here, Eddie?" the boss asked slowly.

"Yeah," I answered. "I'm goin' out and bust up the crooked political bunch that's tryin' to cut in on this ward."

"I see," he said quietly. "It's a crooked bunch that is coming in now, is it?"

"I'll tell the cockeyed world it is."

"Well, that'll be new," he sneered. "Just what do you expect to do, Eddie, to break up this dark cloud that threatens our governmental security?"

I was not sure but I began to think maybe he was kidding me a little and I wouldn't go for that. So I said straight from the shoulder:

"I'm goin' to raise money so that we can show the voters just what certain people are tryin' to put over on 'em."

"Oh," he said like he was pretending to be surprised, "It's money you are going after?"

"Well, we need some right now. Me an' Dan has talked this all over and we can't let no grass grow under our feet."

"No," he muttered, "I presume not. Just what are you raising this money for and how are you going to raise it, Eddie?"

"Well, we're raising it to protect the organization here in the ward."

"I thought you were going to protect the working man?"

"The organization does that. Bust up the organization an' the workin' man suffers. It's our friends that'll benefit in the long run. Gee, Boss, that's life, ain't it?"

"Oh, I see," he said again. "Well, how are you going to raise the money?"

"That's where you come in," I busted out.

"Yep," he snapped, "that's just where I figured I came in."

"Sure. Dan told me to come to you and explain this situation. . . ."

"Why didn't Dan come himself?"

"Because Dan is a very busy man. We can't do

too much talkin' about this thing right now, Boss. But I'm tellin' you that we're givin' you a chance to chip in five hundred bucks an' save yourself a good many thousand. We're goin' to prevent lots of labor troubles. Besides that, if the people who are against us ever get into power, you'll have to put all your electric wires four inches away from the walls."

"What the devil are you talking about?" the boss asked.

"I'm only tellin' you," I repeated, "you'll have to put 'em all four inches away from the wall." To save my life I could not think of that word they had to be put into.

The boss looked at me and said, "What has Rafferty been telling you?"

"Just what I'm tellin' you," I said to him very firmly, "at least four inches. An' think what it'd cost you if you had to raise the roof!"

The boss moved the papers around again and looked at me kind of funny and said, "Eddie, are you still on that outing? Do you know what you are talking about at all?"

"I'll tell the cockeyed world I know!" I said. "Dan an' me talked this all over last night after the outin' when Dan found out all the schemin' that was goin' on. I ain't as good with words as Dan is, but the fact is that you simply got to kick in with

five hundred fer our fund. If you don't, new guys will have the political jobs around here an' then you'll be up against raising the foundry roof higher from the ovens, and doin' that four-inch thing to the wires.

"Don't get the idea that I like this business o' puttin' the buzzer on you fer dough, Boss. I don't. You been decent enough to me an' I like you fine. . . . I figger it's fer your own good."

"I see," the boss said slowly. "Another of these back tax things? Suppose that I do give the five hundred, Eddie, does that mean that I won't have to raise the roof and go over the electric system?"

"Well, you know Dan," I answered. "As long as Dan's in power you won't even have to put fire escapes on the office building. Dan an' me are your friends an' naturally we figger you want to help keep us in power."

The boss whistled and clicked his teeth a little bit and said something I did not understand; but I knew about what it was from the look on his face as he said it.

"You can see for yourself that we're offerin' you a chance to save yourself a lot of dough," I explained.

"But suppose I give the five hundred and Rafferty is licked? What am I to expect then?"

"Who could lick Rafferty?" I asked. "I mean,

who could if he's got the money to fight with? There ain't no two ways about it, Boss. You better kick in on this thing an' so had lots of other people because if you don't there's goin' to be a real old-time political row in this ward. We'll be tied up with strikes an' everythin' else.

"I ain't as good with words as Dan is, an' I can't make you see it like he could, but . . ."

"I see it all right," the boss grumbled. "The trouble is he is right, too. I want to play along with you and Dan because I know I've got to.

"The kick right now seems to be that my plant does not conform to the law. They forget that it did when it was built. Even if it did this minute, and I tried to fight this gang, the tail would wag the dog right away because the law would not conform to my plant. Fellows like Rafferty have a way of changing laws and regulations so that nothing ever conforms to them. . . .

"But you better tell Rafferty when you give him this money, Eddie, that this makes eight hundred dollars in the last few weeks. There can't be any more for a good time to come."

I was pretty excited because I saw that the five hundred was in and I knew I could go back to Dan and collect one hundred for myself. Also, it gave me confidence to get this over with my old boss. I began to think of all the business people around the

district and what a rosy time Dan and me could work out for ourselves.

But I knew I would have to remember that word conduit. If a fellow is going to be a politician he has got to be a gentleman and well educated and all that. The bum that can't talk good English is especially handicapped in politics in our district because he is too much like the fellows he has to con.

"Yes," the boss was saying, "I will go for the five hundred but you can take it from me that's the end for a good long time to come. And you can tell Rafferty for me, I expect him to be my friend. He ought to keep the unions from kicking up and keep the boys in the plant here convinced that they've got good jobs and are getting a square deal."

"Sure thing," I agreed. "Dan'll do that all right."

Then the boss leaned over and pushed a little button on his desk and a girl came in. He looked at me while she stood there and said, "How do you want this check payable, Eddie?"

Well, I had not thought about that. Right away it came to me that if it was payable to Dan Rafferty, I might not get my hundred. And if it was payable to me it might never show that Dan Rafferty got the

money and if there was ever any trouble I might be in a jam. So I said:

"Boss, you better make it payable to the Dan Rafferty Voters' League."

He nodded and said to the girl, "Draw a check payable to the Dan Rafferty Voters' League for five hundred dollars and enter it as a contribution for political campaign funds. Please bring the check right back."

The girl went out. She was a pretty little thing and she had some kind of perfume that smelled very nice. I felt very good about the check and maybe she looked prettier than she was. Maybe the perfume smelled better on that account. Anyway, I turned and looked after her as she walked down an aisle between rows of desks and went over to a screen. I watched her while she talked to a funny-looking little runt in there.

I saw him nod his head at her and he did not have any hair except right around his ears and back of his right ear he had a long pen stuck. He looked like a cartoon, but the girl did not laugh at him.

"Who's that little kid?" I asked the boss.

He was fumbling with his papers again. He said: "That's my secretary."

"What's her name?"

"Golden."

"Damned if she ain't," I muttered.

"What did you say?" the boss asked.

"She's a nice-lookin' girl," I answered.

"She is a nice girl, too," he said, "a mighty nice girl." And then we just sat there and I puffed at the cigar, which had gone out, while the boss looked over some of the papers on his desk. Finally he looked up and threw me a packet of matches. There was a funny little smile about his lips.

"Eddie," he said, "I don't know just what to think about you tying in with Dan Rafferty. You have always been a good steady worker and a dependable, honest fellow. Just what effect this political nonsense is going to have, I don't know."

That made me a little sore and I answered, "As long as I ain't workin' for you, Boss, you don't need to care, do you?"

He said, "No. No, I don't need to care. But I think you ought to. To be honest with you, Eddie, I don't think you are smart enough to play that game. I think you will find yourself in trouble before you're done with it. Though, as you say, it is none of my business."

"We ain't disagreed on a single thing so far," I answered, letting him know that it certainly was none of his business. He shrugged his shoulders and lit his own cigar.

Pretty soon the girl came in and laid the check

on his desk. He picked up a pen and signed on the line.

The girl leaned over and blotted the signature and her hands were very white and clean looking. When she moved them it was very nice and dainty. I had never seen hands like those.

"Eddie's leaving us," the boss told her in a queer tone of voice. She glanced at me. Her eyes were blue. "He's going into politics." I knew when the boss said that, he was just riding me before this girl. And somehow I could not think of anything to say while she was there.

She smiled a little bit and that did more things to her cheeks. I saw her teeth. They were very white and even except for one that seemed to turn just the least little bit so that it was prettier than if it was straight. I could see that she did not know what to say and I guess she could see that I did not.

"Eddie's been foreman of the cleaning floor for the last three years," the boss told her, "and he's worked for us here about five years. I thought you might like to wish him good luck in his new venture."

"Yes, indeed," the girl said quietly.

"Thanks," I said.

More and more I felt uncomfortable because it seemed to me the girl understood the boss a lot better than I did. He might just as well have told her

that I had turned crooked. It wasn't what he said, it was the way he said it.

I stood up and reached for the check and the boss handed it over without a word. That perfume was in the air again and it certainly made a lot of difference.

"Well, Miss Golden," I said to the girl, "thank you very much for wishing me luck. Me an' Dan Rafferty are pretty good friends."

The girl lifted her eyebrows a little bit and then she said very slowly, "I see." Her voice was just as nice as everything else about her.

The boss drummed a little bit with his fingers or I might have said something foolish. Finally, though, I just reached for my hat and said good-by and walked out of the office. I made up my mind right there that Miss Golden was a lot too good for the boss and, anyway, it didn't seem to me that such a pretty girl should have to work. That is, work outside the regular things a woman is supposed to do, like cooking, washing dishes and things like that.

I went right down to Dan Rafferty's insurance office and on the way I was a little bit worried about how soon I'd get my hundred dollars. I puffed at the boss' cigar pretty fast and it gagged me again and finally I had to throw it away.

I felt like smoking so I lit up a cigarette. I was

smoking that when I walked into Dan's office and asked if he was there.

The office was not a very big place. It was only two rooms and in the outside room there was a pimply young fellow that worked a typewriter, and a sort of bookkeeper and manager who handled things when Dan was out. There were no girls in Dan's office. Dan used to swear a lot and the whole office smelled like a wet cigar.

Dan heard me outside and called out so that I could hear him through the partition. "Come in, Eddie, lad, walk right in."

So I winked at the pimply kid in the corner, went over and opened the door and walked into Dan's private office. He had a big oak desk he used to put his feet on. It was a covered desk and along the flat part of the top there were rows of letter files. The files were made of brown cardboard with red and blue streaks running through it and on the back of each one was written "Letters." They were pretty dusty and I guess they were a stall.

The desk in front of Dan was piled high with papers and they were dusty too and cigar ashes were on them.

Dan kicked a chair around and I sat down. "Step on that coffin nail, Eddie, it stinks," he told me. Then he pulled one of his cigars out of his vest and handed it to me. I stepped on the cigarette and put

the cigar in my mouth. He pulled a slide out of the desk and set an ash tray on it in front of me. The slide was all burned from cigar and cigarette stubs.

"How'd you make out with the boss?" Dan asked me.

"Oh, I put it over," I said. Then I pulled the check out; tossed it onto his desk. Dan grinned and picked it up and fingered it.

"He had to come through all right," he said.

"It wasn't so easy. He did a lot of squirmin' and talkin' before he scratched that one off," I told Dan.

"How far did you have to go with him?" Dan asked.

"The roof, the fire escapes and the . . . conduits."

"Had to use 'em all, eh?" Dan grinned. "I guess he was a little sore about that touch on the back taxes."

"I guess he was."

"Well," Dan mumbled, "it ain't always pleasant to put the finger on good guys, but the game is the game an' he'll feel different when I find a way to square it with him."

As he spoke, Dan was looking at the check and at last he said, "What's the idea? Dan Rafferty Voters' League?"

"Well, Dan," I explained, "I didn't want it made

payable direct to you and I didn't want it payable to me, an' I thought if I said cash he would think that looked funny. So I figgered he could show this as a campaign contribution an' give it to your organization an' that would let all of us out."

Dan chewed the end of his cigar a minute; finally set his teeth so hard that the ashes fell down into his lap. He held the check in his left hand and brushed his vest and trousers with the palm of his right.

"That ain't so dumb at that, Eddie," he grunted. "I'm beginnin' to think you got some sense. Not much, but some."

"Maybe you're right," I laughed. "Anyway, how about my hundred bucks?"

"You bet your life, boy," Dan boomed, "you bet your life! Nobody waits on Dan Rafferty's dough. How do you want it, Eddie?" He reached inside his vest and pulled out a roll of bills. They were all yellowbacks. "Want a century note?" he smiled. "Did you ever own one?"

Well, I never had owned one and it would have been kind of nice to get the feel of it. But now that I was using my head, instead of beating castings to death on a cleaning floor, I thought it over a minute and finally told him, "No, I don't want a hundred-dollar bill. In the first place there ain't three guys in the district can change it, an' in the second, there

ain't two in the district that wouldn't wonder where I stole it."

Dan stood up and laughed till the windows seemed to shake. Then he slapped me another of his wallops on the back. Finally he counted out five new twenty-dollar bills. I folded them up and put them in my pocket and felt pretty swell about it.

"Well," Dan said, "that settles that. Everythin's square an' on the level, ain't it, kid?"

"It sure is, Dan," I agreed. "But on the strength of what you were sayin' last night, I quit my job at the foundry. What's the next thing to be done?"

Dan walked across the room and looked out the window into the street below. The glass was pretty dirty but he did not seem to notice it. To me he looked mighty important as he stood there. I could see he was thinking things over so I kept quiet until he turned around and came back and sat down at his desk. Then he leaned over the slide and stubbed his cigar in the ash tray there. Our heads were pretty close together.

"I got some new dope on Creedon," Dan said in a low voice. "He's after us all right. I figgered the best punch in a fight is the first punch an' I landed that myself this mornin'."

"You socked Creedon?" I asked, surprised.

"No," Dan grunted in disgust. "I just put the

bum out of business, that's all. I'll show 'em who's runnin' things around here!"

"You closed up his joint?" I asked. Dan always did things in a big way. Nothing surprised me.

"After I left you last night," he admitted, "I went right around and saw certain people an' when Mr. Freddy Creedon showed up to open his pool room this mornin' he found two cops there waitin' to serve a court order on him. Some people living near his place sent in a sworn statement that the billiard room was a common nuisance. They said men were drinkin' in there, the place was noisy, an' they asked that it be closed because it was a menace to the youth of the neighborhood."

As he spoke, Dan grinned his big gold teeth into sight, his eyes beamed and his stomach shook under his big vest. He got a real kick out of it all right and to save my life I could not help laughing.

"Dan," I said, "you're a knock-out!"

He laughed some more and so did I and we had kind of a love feast there. Dan agreed with me that he was a knock-out and finally I figured I had a little credit coming, too. So I said, "I ain't so tough myself, Dan. It took me less than a half hour to clip the boss fer five hundred bucks."

Dan laid his big hand on my arm and squeezed it a little bit and winked. He said, "What the hell, you ain't started yet!"

Just then the older fellow from the outside office knocked on the door and came in. I sat quiet and Dan looked up.

"Yeah?" he asked the man.

The old fellow had a paper in his hand and he brought it over to Dan's desk. Dan reached up and took it and looked it over. I leaned back in my chair and did not pay any attention to them. The fellow from the outside office stood there waiting while Dan read the paper. I saw that his shoes needed shining and there were big bags in the knees of his pants. Those pants got plenty of pressing but it was all where they shone most and that was on the seat.

When he reached to take the paper from Dan I saw his hands. They were thin as bird claws and just about as yellow. They might have been claws except that the black hair on the back of them was very long. From the first I did not like this little fellow. He looked and acted too much like a mouse.

"Tell 'em to jump in the lake," Dan said referring to the paper. He waved his hand and the little fellow backed away and went out of the room. He was an important guy all right! Dan turned back to me.

"No," he said, "you ain't too tough. You're goin' to do pretty well with me, Eddie. First off we got to lick this Creedon. After that, I'll use you

as organization committeeman right here in this district. I got big plans and they're going to work, too. Maybe in a coupla years I'll make you ward committeeman an' you know what that means."

"I'll tell the cockeyed world," I agreed. "That suits me all right. Gee! Ward committeeman! That's a good job."

"You just stick to your knittin' an' you'll have it, kid," Dan promised me. "I like your idea about gettin' contributions for the Dan Rafferty Voters' League. I think we'll just form that little organization an' elect you treasurer, Eddie. That'll let people know where you stand an' explain what you're livin' on."

"Well, if I had used an X-ray I couldn't have found anything wrong in that idea. I figured I had better play it up with him, so I said, "I did pretty well my first try. I'll git better as things go along."

Dan took hold of my arm again and squeezed it and winked at me. He grinned. A little piece of cigar was stuck on one of his gold teeth and it looked queer. "We'll keep it goin' all right, Eddie," he told me in a low voice. "How does it seem not to be walkin' around that cleanin' floor? Pretty good. don't it?"

"I'll tell the cockeyed world," I answered.

"Well," Dan went on, "I got a few things buzzin' around in my belfry an' I want to think

them out a bit. This is your first day off. Take a walk around the street an' maybe spend a little of that soft dough you got. Come back here about five o'clock an' I'll have somethin' to say to you."

I walked outside and the air seemed fine. I felt great because I knew I would not hear any noon whistles or have to listen to any ginney conversation while I grabbed my lunch sitting on a switching track outside the foundry. Dan had said it was my first day off but I knew better. I knew it was my first day as a politician. So I went over to Rourke's place and bought a round of drinks for five or six of the boys that were in there trying to pick up after the outing.

Three or four of them were from the foundry. I explained to them that I had quit my job out there because Dan Rafferty knew that certain grafters were trying to bust up the unions and get an open shop, less pay and longer hours.

"Dan told me," I explained to them, "that if somethin' wasn't done about this, all you guys will be on the loose before you know it. He asked me to quit an' go to work to beat this racket, an' I did. I won't make as much money as I did out at the plant but I'm a single feller and if a man can't do things for his friends he ain't much of a man."

A couple of the boys wanted to know who was starting trouble and finally I told them it was

Creedon, and that he was trying to tie in with the big politicians and capitalists so that he could make all the working men work longer for less money and so make more for the banks and the capitalists. You can imagine how well that set with them.

One of them said, "There's only one thing to do with a guy like that Creedon. That's knock his block loose! As far as I'm concerned, I'd just as soon sit on a hydrant in some dark street until he comes along."

"No rough stuff," I said. "You guys have got to leave it to Dan an' me. But when we need you, we want you to be in line."

They all said they certainly would be.

I bought another drink and while we were drinking it Cap Felton came in. Cap was the head timekeeper out at the foundry and just as soon as he showed up there I got an idea that the boss had sent for him. I did not care about that. There was nothing going on that I had to hide from the foundry boss. I called Cap over and asked him to have a drink and he sat in at the table.

None of the fellows were feeling any too good and they all went home along toward dinner time. That gave me a chance to have a talk with Cap Felton.

"I seen that little girl, that secretary of the boss'," I said to him.

"Yeah?" Felton asked. "That's little Nellie Golden. You know who she is?"

"Nope," I said, "I don't."

Cap looked surprised, then said, "She's worked out at the foundry three or four years. Don't you remember her old man, the cop that was bumped off down at the docks?"

"Jim Golden?" I asked surprised. "You mean the one that went after that warehouse bunch?"

"Sure," Felton told me, "that was her old man. You remember . . . they gave him a big funeral here in the district. He got an inspector's honors."

"Sure, I remember that," I said. "Gee, I never knew that kid was his daughter. She's a peach."

"She's a nice little girl," Felton said. "Everybody likes Nellie. She's worked up to a pretty good job out there, too."

Then I remembered that Dan Rafferty used to talk a whole lot about what he did for Jim Golden's widow and kid and it all came back to me that Rafferty had run a big benefit for Golden's family. Everybody around the district knew that he went to the front in some way and had the widow's pension increased and got some kind of an insurance thing for her so that she could keep her home and educate this little kid. And everybody loved Dan for it.

I felt kind of good about that because if all this

was true, the organization had done a whole lot for Nellie and her mother and I could not see where she would have any kick about politicians. What the boss had said to her about me going into politics must have made her madder than it did me.

Anyway, I changed the subject with Felton and figured I'd have a good talk with Dan about this girl. I had never known many girls because at that time I would just as soon have made fudge as go to a dance. But this Nellie Golden had just about knocked my eye out. I figured, if the breaks came my way, to get to know her better.

CHAPTER V

"Whatever I do Dan, I'll take my cue from you."

WHEN Cap Felton and I separated I still had some time before four thirty so I just walked around the streets and first thing I knew I had walked down to the section where old Jim Golden lived before that bunch of river thieves bumped him off. It was funny that way. All the time I thought I was planning about how Dan and me would work in the future, and trying to guess out how many more soft hundred dollars would come my way, I really was thinking about Nellie Golden.

You know, I was not thinking about her exactly but she was in my mind. Sometimes things are like that.

I walked down past the house where she lived and maybe being in politics and having a hundred dollars, with more in sight, and no hard work to do, kind of went to my head. I walked very slow past

the steps of her house and looked things over pretty carefully.

If anybody had told me a week before I would be a politician with plenty of money and talking inside stuff with Dan Rafferty, I would have said they were crazy. So I could not see where it was any crazier to think that maybe after I got to be a big shot, I could take Nellie out of that house and give her a real place to live. There was another funny thing about it all: I never even thought about how Nellie might feel. I guess I was just dreaming.

At four thirty I was back at Dan's office. When I went in the hairy old guy in the outside room looked up at me and scowled.

"Hello, Palsey," I said, kind of snappy, "is Dan around?"

"He's inside," the old mouse snapped back at me. Then he turned and went to the door of Dan's office and stood there a couple of seconds holding his skinny hand up in the air like he was figuring on whether or not he should knock. I hate guys like that so I pushed him aside and took hold of the knob and opened the door. I stuck my head in and said, "Ready fer me, Dan?"

Dan was sitting in his big chair with the black cushion. He had his feet on the oak desk and there was a cigar in his mouth but it was not lit.

"Hello, hello, Eddie," he said, "sure, I'm ready.

Come in." When he talked the cigar danced up and down and more ashes fell on his vest. He got up and brushed them off and then he shook hands with me like he had hold of a country pump.

After a few seconds he kicked my chair around and we sat there at the slide of the desk again. Dan said:

"Now, you listen to me. I'll show you what it can mean to a young chump like you to get in with a smart politician." I grinned and Dan went on. "The reason I tell you all this, Eddie, is because Creedon is goin' to make us quite a lot of trouble and the first thing we got to do is beat him."

"We'll beat him, all right," I said. "I already had a talk with half a dozen guys from the foundry an' I tipped them off that Creedon was tryin' to bust up their union. I said he was playing with the capitalists an' the bankers an' one of the boys said he'd be willin' to sit on a hydrant on a dark street until Creedon came along."

Dan grinned and nodded his head. "That's good work," he said. "But we don't want to pull any rough stuff if we can do it the other way."

"Whatever I do, Dan, I'll take my cue from you."

"It's just as well to be ready with the rough stuff in case we need it," he answered, "but don't start nothin' until I say so."

I nodded and Dan reached into his vest pocket and pulled out his watch. It was a very heavy gold watch and you had to press the stem to open it. Inside the case was pasted a little picture of Dan's wife. I looked at the face of the watch and the figures there were very big and black. I figured it was a railroad watch. It was three minutes to five.

"To-morrow mornin' you can call on a couple of fellers that ought to be ready to kick in good for the Dan Rafferty Voters' League," Dan said slowly, his big thumb rubbing over the crystal on the watch. "Come in about nine o'clock in the mornin' an' I'll tip you off on how to work each one."

"That's O. K. with me," I agreed.

Dan leaned back in his chair and I puffed my cigar a minute and then I said:

"Say, Dan, you did a lot for old Jim Golden, didn't you?"

"Jim Golden, the cop, you mean?" Dan asked. "The feller that was bumped off by the Mickey Driggs gang?"

"Yeah," I said trying to speak casual, "the bull that left a widow an' a young kid named Nellie."

"I'll say I did!" Dan boasted. "No sooner was Jim cold than I was around talkin' to his widow. Right here in the district I bought coal an' a couple of big baskets of food an' sent 'em right around to

their house. I told her not to worry a bit because I would see that Jim had a good funeral, with honors, an' it wouldn't cost her a dime. . . ."

"His widow's still livin' down there in the same old place, ain't she?"

"Sure," Dan said. "Jim was back in his premiums, but I fixed that an' got her full insurance. Then I straightened out her pension for her an' ran a benefit so she could get some dough an' educate her kid."

"She did it all," I said kind of slowly. "Little Nellie Golden has grown up now an' she's secretary to my old boss at the foundry."

"Sure, I know that," Dan said, "an' a damn' nice little girl, too."

"I'll tell the cockeyed world," I said. Then I was going to ask Dan if he wouldn't fix it up some way so that I could get cozy with Nellie Golden, but before I got a chance to do that, the mouse from the outside office was tapping on the door. Dan looked up and hollered, "Come in!"

The old bird came in and laid a newspaper on Dan's desk. With his hairy yellow finger he poked at a notice that he wanted Dan to see specially. Dan picked up the paper and smiled both his gold teeth into sight. Then he tipped his chair back, put his feet on the desk and grunted at the old

fellow who immediately went out, closing the door behind him. Dan said to me:

"Listen to this, Eddie, I guess Creedon won't feel great when he sees this!" He started to read it aloud but I got up and walked around and looked over his shoulder and there in the paper I read:

"BILLIARD ROOM CLOSED BY OFFICIAL EDICT

"GLAVIN ISSUES ORDER UNDER

"COMMON NUISANCE ORDINANCE

"The pool and billiard room operated by Frederick Creedon is desolate to-day. When the well-known proprietor appeared to open for business this morning, he found in the familiar doorway two uniformed police officers who courteously but promptly barred his entrance. They handed to Mr. Creedon an order under the hand of Judge Michael Glavin, restraining the proprietor from opening the premises because of continuous complaints which have been received against the place.

"Creedon, who is well known in the district and commonly reputed to possess considerable political power, immediately went to the captain of the precinct and entered violent complaint against what he called the 'high-handed efforts of his enemies.' The captain, however, was obdurate. It is reported the official pointed out, that the steps taken against the billiard room and its proprietor were entirely within the law and it was not within his power to do anything about it other than to see that the court order was enforced.

"Creedon left the station house in a high temper but assured newspaper men that the whole thing was what he called a frame-up.

" 'Don't have any fears,' Creedon said. 'I'll have the place open inside of an hour. Everybody with half an eye knows that my place has always been orderly and well operated and my standing in this community is a little bit too well established for any gang of hi-jackers to get away with a scheme like this.'

"He spoke also of men whose names carry considerable weight in the politics of the district and hinted broadly that this was a move on their part 'to break up the political support' which Creedon has been acquiring for the purpose, he says, of putting an end to the dictatorial, high-handed methods of grafters who for years have controlled that section.

"One of the newspaper men present asked Mr. Creedon why he did not call on the ward committeeman and recognized political boss, Dan Rafferty, and state his case in that quarter. Creedon scowled darkly and answered, 'If I never get the place open, I wouldn't go to him for a favor.'

" 'Do you wish to infer,' one of the reporters asked, 'that Mr. Rafferty himself is at the bottom of this move?'

" ' I don't wish to infer anything,' Creedon snapped, 'but I will say this to you: Dan Rafferty, or anybody else, better not get in my way around here. This is the cheapest political trick I ever heard of, and you can bet your last dollar they are not going to get away with it. I am a reputable business man of years'

standing, and I am going to fight this thing through to the very last ditch. We'll find out whether or not there is any justice in our courts. The men who thought out this trick will find that all they've done is hurl a boomerang that will come back to them harder than they sent it out.'

"A reporter later telephoned to Dan Rafferty at the River Trust Company. Mr. Rafferty appeared to be surprised to learn of the closing of Creedon's billiard room. After he had been told Creedon's remarks, he laughed genially and said, 'Anybody that wants to be ward boss around here can take my job. All it's ever done for me since I had it is cost me money. But you can tell Mr. Creedon, or anybody else, that I am too busy with my insurance and banking business to run around closing up one-horse pool rooms.' "

"Gee," I said, when I finished it, "that's a beaut, Dan. It certainly makes a sucker out of Creedon. Did he get the billiard room open to-day?"

"He did not," Dan boomed, "an' you can take it from me, he won't. An' the next thing Mr. Freddy Creedon knows, the Social Club of the Blues will be raided as a gambling dive. We'll see how he likes that."

That seemed pretty raw to me and I wondered if even Dan might not go too far.

"It's all right if you can get away with it," I said, "but can't he go to the courts?"

Dan's stomach shook again under his big vest and he spread out his hands, palms upward. "Sure, he

can go to the courts," he answered, "but what courts are there? There's only one an' Mike Glavin runs that. It'll take Creedon a year an' a half to reach the Supreme Court on an appeal. Inside o' three months I'll have him so broke an' disgusted that he'll be lookin' for a homestead in Oklahoma!"

"Well," I said, "I'm strong fer that. I'll go through."

"We'll go, all right," Dan growled. "You show up here around nine o'clock to-morrow an' before the week's over we can raise quite a little money. Then we'll keep you busy callin' on voters keepin' 'em lined up for us."

I went outside and walked up the street smoking one of Dan's cigars. It was a cinch to figure that my game now was to watch my step mighty close and to work cozy with Dan, but at the same time to watch him. I began to see good big money in the future and a lot of political pull that would make me a big guy around the district. My mind was full of those things and I felt pretty well satisfied with the way everything had gone. But even at a time like that I remember asking myself should I do something right away, or should I wait until I was a bigger shot, before going around to call on Nellie Golden.

That is the way with things like that. Just when you think you are laying some pretty smart plans,

something happens that you never figured on. This time it was a very big something, so to speak, and it upset the whole apple cart. It certainly changed Dan's life and mine and, I guess, Nellie's as well.

I was sitting in Rourke's back room letting Flatfoot tell me how big a guy I was going to be, when I was called on the telephone. It was the ratty-looking manager in the outside office down at Dan's. I was still smoking the same cigar Dan had given me in his office so you can see how quickly things happened.

The minute I heard his voice I knew something was wrong. He could hardly talk. At first I thought maybe Dan had bawled him out for something but I mighty quick found it was not that.

"Dan just left here," he whined at me. "He just grabbed his hat an' ran out . . . he's on his way home now."

"Well, what about it?" I asked. "What's the idea?"

"They telephoned him . . . she was all right one minute . . . talkin' to a neighbor, she was, an' laughin' . . . an' then she just fell right there on the front steps an' the neighbor says they can't bring her to."

By this time I had the creeps because I did not know who he was talking about.

"Who fell on the steps?" I hollered into the

telephone. "Who is it Dan ran out to get?"

"His wife," the manager said. "Mrs. Rafferty . . . I guess she's dead an' they just didn't want to tell Dan. . . ."

I did not wait for the rest of it. I knew that, rough as Dan was, underneath it all he had a pretty big heart and I knew how he loved this wife of his who had come along through life with him from the days when he was nothing right up until now when Dan was rich and powerful. His was a rough and ready love but the deeper for that very reason and it took just such a message as this to make me realize that it was not really the easy money I had got through Dan that made me like him, it was Dan himself.

I never would have worried about Dan in a fight either political or fist. But this thing about his wife . . . I knew that would hit poor Dan where he could not fight back. I just left the receiver hanging there in the telephone booth and when I walked out of Rourke's and Flatfoot spoke to me, it seemed unimportant and I did not answer him.

Sometimes feelings are deep inside a fellow and he hardly suspects they are there until something happens that brings them out. Now I knew I loved Dan and wanted to help him, politics or no politics.

That feeling of importance I had was gone now. I felt very small and very weak just like I really

am and like everybody else is. I would have given everything I owned if I could have just said some little thing to Dan that would help him. But that was just it. The only time when a man like Dan cannot help himself is when there is no help. There are times like that.

I walked along the street and people told me afterwards that they spoke to me. I do not even remember seeing them. I was in a kind of a daze. It was queer, too, because I never even had seen Mrs. Rafferty, but I just knew inside me that she was dead. I had a feeling that Dan was just crumpled up and suffering and not the Dan Rafferty that he had been.

After about half an hour trying to figure things out, I went right to Dan's house. I wanted to get to him; wanted him to see for himself that he could bet on me right to the last drop.

Dan lived in a brownstone house and there was a little garden in front of it on each side of high steps which ran up to an old-fashioned entrance. There was a silver plate on the door and in old English letters of black was Dan's name.

Two or three women were standing on the sidewalk in front of the house and I could hear them gossiping. They told how Dan had reached those steps just a little while before and had seen in their faces that his wife was gone. They whispered

among themselves about how Dan had stood there and run his big hand through his hair and finally said, "God above . . . I never even had a chance to bid her good-by!"

Then I heard them say that his jaw seemed to sag and pull wrinkles into his face. His big shoulders stooped and as he stumbled slowly up the steps and through the door, he was bent. They wondered a lot about that because nobody had ever seen Dan Rafferty stumble before.

About the house the very air seemed different. I hated those gossiping women. To me they were like vandals walking on Dan's flowers. I turned away from them and walked through the alley beside the house to the back door. I knocked and nobody answered. I opened the door and went into the kitchen. Dan's colored cook, Chloe, was sitting there beside the stove and her hands were clenched in her lap. She was rocking back and forth on a kitchen chair. Tears were streaming down her cheeks and now and then she would moan very softly. I looked at her a minute, then asked:

"Where's Dan Rafferty?"

She tried to answer me but could not. I guess her throat was filled.

I wanted to see Dan, wanted him to know that I was right there just praying that there might be something I could do to help him along. I left

Chloe and walked into the hall and then I could hear Dan upstairs. He was pacing the room. His footsteps seemed heavy; they sort of dragged across the floor.

I raised my eyes and it seemed I could see him above me there walking, walking, walking. Before I had a chance to do anything, someone came quickly downstairs and it was Nellie Golden. She stopped when she saw me. I said:

"Hello, Nellie . . . how's Dan? Is Mrs. Rafferty . . . dead?"

She came down off the stairs into the hall and put her lovely hand on my arm and looked up at me. Even though Nellie did not say so, I knew Mrs. Rafferty was dead. After a minute she said:

"You're his friend, Eddie?" She glanced up at the footsteps.

"Right from here through hell an' back again, Nellie," I promised and it did not seem at all strange that I should talk to her that way because that was just how I felt.

She nodded. "Dan is dazed," she told me. "I'm trying very hard to get him to rest . . . there are so many little things we can do. . . ."

It seemed to me that Nellie just knew everything that ought to be done and she sort of took charge of things for Dan and me. I made telephone calls and got people there who had to be there. We ar-

ranged the house for all the unhappy things that had to happen there in the next few days. Some way or other Nellie and I seemed to get awful close because we were both thinking of Dan and we both knew that the other would do anything for him. She never said that but I knew it. I remembered all Dan had done, in his big, rough way for Nellie and her mother.

The telephone rang a lot and I answered it each time. That's the way with life, the one time a man wants to be alone everybody bothers him most. I felt like I really was helping Dan by taking these telephone calls and answering people who came to the house.

Everybody was nice and all that, but they would have been nicer if they stayed away. I talked with the newspaper people when they came and just as soon as it became generally known about Mrs. Rafferty, hundreds of Dan's friends sent beautiful flowers. I took them and banked them around the room under Nellie's direction.

It was eleven or twelve o'clock at night before everything like that was done and I could see Dan. Then I went into the room where he was. He was just sitting there very quiet with his elbows on his knees and his fingers twining and untwining. His face was wrinkled and he looked very pale.

He seemed hunched forward and somehow did

not look as big as usual. Nellie was standing beside him running her fingers through his shaggy hair and Dan just looked at me a second, started to speak, couldn't, then looked down.

I walked over and put my hand on his shoulder but, like the fool that I am, I could not speak either. Pretty soon Nellie pulled his head over against her and her white hand rubbed his cheek a little. She looked at me and nodded toward the door. I went out. Nellie knew everything.

I tell you all about this because in many ways the sudden passing of Mrs. Rafferty changed Dan. No wisdom on earth is so wise as that which comes through suffering. This intense suffering of Dan's served later to temper his wisdom and his rough-shod sense of justice with an understanding of human weaknesses which he never could have got in any other way.

I stayed at Dan's house and Nellie and I were up with Dan most of the night though he never made any fuss. Nellie tried to get him to eat a little something but he would not. About three in the morning I got him to take a drink and that seemed to help him, although he still was dazed. Now and then he would get up and go into the room where Mrs. Rafferty was and just stand there and look at her for a long time. Then he would walk back to us and never say a word. Once Nellie said to me:

"If he'd only break down! . . . If he could let his feelings get the better of him and cry it out . . . I'm terribly afraid for him, Eddie."

I guess that was the woman in Nellie because I could not imagine Dan Rafferty crying, although I was pretty darned near it all the time myself.

It was about nine thirty the next morning that Tom, the Mayor, called at the house. He paid his respects and saw Dan just for a second. On his way out he took me by the arm and drew me out into the kitchen. I could see he had been in Dan's place lots of times before and though people were standing around out on the street just to get a look at the Mayor, I knew, just like Dan knew, that after all he was not such big pumpkins. When he spoke there was uncertainty in his voice. He glanced around the kitchen to see that we were alone. Then he said:

"These things have to happen, Eddie. Life is made up of them . . . I never saw Dan hit so hard. He couldn't talk to me at all."

Something inside of me burned at that and I looked at the Mayor and said:

"Tom, if you had any brains you wouldn't have tried to make him talk."

It did not seem strange for me to be talking like this to a mayor. He straightened up and looked a little important but it did not click with me and he

saw that. He put a lot of dignity into his next words:

"At a time like this in the lives of men like Dan Rafferty," he said slowly, "others have got to think for him. Dan is my friend. I know that he also is yours. He has taken a great fancy to you and has some big plans in mind. Anything I try to do now will be for Dan's own good and I assumed, because of his friendship for you, that you would feel the same way about it."

"I'll go right to hell fer him," I answered. And I meant every word of it. That seemed to make the Mayor understand better because he said something about me being upset too and then went quickly into other things.

"What about Creedon?" he asked. "This thing could be a great break for Creedon. With Dan not fighting back he can upset this whole ward. I happen to know of the connections he's made. The other party is willing to spend quite a lot of money down here just to weaken Dan's position. As long as Dan can't fight, somebody's got to. As mayor of this city I cannot very well do it . . . but I can help you do it."

"I'll do anythin' fer Dan," I said dully.

"I knew it. There's just one way to beat Creedon in this district and beat him right. That's to break his hold with the other party."

"How are you goin' to do that?" I asked seeing the logic of what he was saying.

The Mayor laughed shortly. "Mike Brennan ran on the other party's ticket for member of the legislature from this district. He ran because Dan promised not to fight him here. He's up at the capital now and he wants an appointment on the Ways and Means Committee. He never can get it without Dan Rafferty and he knows it. The State administration is ours.

"The thing for us to do is to get hold of Mike and tell him he goes on the Ways and Means Committee just as soon as his party drops Freddy Creedon. We'll also tell him he never goes on the Ways and Means Committee if his party doesn't drop Creedon. Have you got that straight?"

Well, I could see Tom's angle all right, even if I was heartbroken for Dan. I nodded my head and Tom said:

"You get in touch with Brennan. Don't wear kid gloves when you handle him, either."

"Had I better work on him first," I asked, "or had I better see the leaders of his party here in town?"

"Work on him, Eddie. Tell him that you are Dan's friend and acting for Dan and you can even tell him you've talked with me about it. If he puts up a squawk, let me know . . . but if I know

Mike Brennan, he won't. Go outside now and get him on the long distance from Dan's office. If he don't believe what you say, tell him to call you back there because he knows Dan's number. Then he can see that you are talking right over Dan's own telephone.

"You can take my word for it that Dan will shake your hand for this as soon as he is himself again."

I began to have a lot of respect for this mayor. I could see that he had a good political mind. So I shook him by the hand.

"I haven't had any sleep or any breakfast," I told him, "but I'll beat it out now an' get myself shaved an' cleaned up. Then I'll get Brennan on the telephone an' let you know what he says."

The Mayor left and bowed solemnly to the people as he walked down the front steps. Twenty-four hours before that I would have thought it was a big thing to have those people hear me calling the Mayor "Tom" and walking to his car with him and shaking his hand good-by. But that morning it did not mean a thing. The sun was out, but it did not shine very bright.

That is, it did not shine very bright for me.

I felt in a kind of a daze. I knew when I walked along the street that people were looking at me and whispering among themselves. They knew I had

spent the night with Dan right there at his house and everybody seemed to realize how hard this business had hurt Dan. I went into a barber shop and got myself a shave. I told the barber to put a hot towel on my face. He said:

"I guess I better wash your eyes out, too, eh? They look pretty sleepy. . . . You must've had quite a night with Dan. How does he take it?"

"Yeah," I told him, "wash my eyes out with somethin'." I never answered him about Dan.

After I was shaved, I went on to Dan's office. When the little manager there started to ask me questions, it seemed to make me mad. I told him to shut up and get out and I went on in and sat down at Dan's desk. Even feeling as low as I did, I got kind of a thrill out of taking hold of his telephone and putting in a call for Mike Brennan. It was easy to get Mike and easy to talk to him. I told him who I was.

"I'm speakin' from Dan Rafferty's office," I said, and right away Brennan's voice changed and he answered:

"Oh, yes, Dan Rafferty. Yes, indeed. We just heard up here that Dan's wife has passed away and we certainly are sorry for Dan. . . ."

"Yeah," I said, "he takes it pretty hard."

"Well, well, well," Brennan muttered so I hardly could hear him, "he takes it hard, eh? You never

can tell! I've always said that no matter how hard a man is, he's got a soft spot somewhere an' he squirms when you hit it. . . . Not that I mean Dan is a hard man, but . . . well . . . you know. . . ."

"I'm speakin' for Dan," I interrupted him, "an' I just had a good talk with Tom, the Mayor."

"Yes, yes. Yes, indeed," Brennan babbled along. "Fine fellows, both of 'em. Big men, too . . . smart . . . smart an' fine. . . . Yes, siree!"

I could feel it coming over me that this fellow Brennan was a bunk artist and after I discovered that the fact that he was in the legislature meant nothing to me.

"About that Ways an' Means thing," I said very importantly. Before I could go any farther he cleared his throat so it sounded like static on a radio and very quickly, I said:

"Don't forget this is a long distance call an' costin' money. . . ." That calmed him down a little and finally he said:

"What does Dan want?"

I could tell by his voice that anything Dan wanted meant a lot to Brennan, so I took the bull by the horns just like I did in digging up that five hundred from my old boss.

"It ain't what he wants . . . it's what he's gonna get."

"Of course," Brennan said, "sure thing. . . . Dan knows where I stand."

"I'll tell the cockeyed world," I said to Brennan. "If you're ready now to hear just where things stand, I'm ready to tell you. Dan's home with his dead wife now but I'm speakin' for him an' if you want to prove that, you can call back his number right here or you can call up Tom, the Mayor. . . ."

"No, no," Brennan assured me, "no, indeed. Go right ahead."

"All right," I cracked, "if you want to go on that Ways an' Means Committee you see that your leaders here in town serve notice on Freddy Creedon that they're all done with him. The minute your party breaks with Creedon you go on the Ways an' Means Committee."

I thought that was putting it briefly and right to the point and I guess Brennan did too because it took him about ten seconds before he could think of an answer and then he said:

"Does that come straight from Dan?"

"Well," I said kind of laughing, "don't pay any attention to it an' see if you ever land that Ways an' Means Committee assignment. If you cross up Dan you won't even go back to the legislature."

Brennan cleared his throat again and said:

"My friend, this isn't a matter of politics. It's

a matter of friendship. My loyalty to Dan Rafferty stands above any political bone of contention. If I can do for Dan what he wants done with reference to Creedon, you can assure him for me that it's as good as done."

"This'll put you on the Ways an' Means Committee sure as hell," I told him. "Now you let me know right away what you've done."

When that conversation was over, I called up Tom and told him about it and he just laughed and said, "Everything will be all right, Eddie. You can mark my words on that. Brennan's high ideals and loyalty to Rafferty are just what we need." He was laughing when he said it.

I went out and had some breakfast and then went to my room and changed my clothes. I fingered the crisp twenty-dollar bills that Dan had handed me such a short time before. When they crinkled it was like a voice that talked to me. Between pitying Dan and getting into politics, I guess I was in kind of a mess. But it seemed to me that Dan needed somebody that was hard-boiled right now and I figured I better be hard-boiled for him because he was up against it.

I knew I would be busy around his house for the next day or two so I took two of the twenty-dollar bills and went and bought myself a black suit and some black shoes. That took most of the day be-

cause some of the padding had to be taken out of the shoulders.

On my way back to Dan's I stopped at the office and the hairy little guy told me that there was a man inside waiting for me. He also said that Brennan had called up from the capital and left a message.

"What'd he say?" I asked the old book louse.

"He just said to tell you everything was all right," he answered.

Then I opened the door and went into Dan's private office and there was Freddy Creedon. He was looking pretty blue but he got right down to business.

"I'm licked," he told me, "I know I'm licked and I'm here to make the best terms I can. All I want of Dan is to get that damned order off my pool room so I can make a living an' support my family. I'll make any statement he wants an' I'll even throw the support of the Blues to him in the next campaign. . . . I know Dan was big enough to close my business an' now I see that he's big enough to turn the whole State loose against me. . . . I'm just licked. All I want is a chance to open up an' do business again."

I felt kind of sorry for poor Creedon. He had hold of a lion's tail, so to speak, and couldn't let go until Dan muzzled the lion. For a minute I

did not know what to do but I thought of Dan sitting there in that room all quiet and crushed and I knew he had softened up a lot.

"Well," I told Creedon, "Dan is a good guy. I'll speak to him about it an' see what we can do."

He thanked me and shook my hand and said, "I'm sorry about his wife, Eddie, that's a tough break for Dan an' you tell him that, too. I sent some flowers up there with my card on 'em an' as far as I'm concerned, if he will just let me open my business up, I'll play the game with him an' call everythin' even."

"See me in the mornin' here," I said. "I guess it'll be all right."

Then I went back to Dan's house and Nellie was there and her mother, too. Nellie was in the kitchen with Chloe and they were fixing something for Dan to eat. I could hear him walking upstairs and I looked at Nellie and there was a strange look on her face. It was a little bit different.

"I think he'll eat something now," she said. When she said it her voice was a little different, too. Even Dan's step on the floor overhead was different. I turned away and went upstairs and so into the room where Dan was.

He was walking up and down the floor and his jaw was set. He looked more like his old self; more like an elephant crashing through reeds.

"Eddie," he said, his voice hard, "look at the nerve of that skunk!" As he spoke he held out his right hand and opened the fingers. There, crumpled up, was Creedon's card which had come with the flowers. I took it and straightened it out and read it slowly. Dan continued pacing. He was thoroughly mad.

After a minute I told him the whole story about Brennan and Tom and Creedon. Dan stopped short when I said that I had told Creedon I thought things would be all right to open his pool room.

"You told him that?" he bellowed at me. "What the hell is the matter with you? If I'm goin' to make guys I break, what's the use of breakin' 'em? You go back to Creedon, Eddie, and stuff this damn card right down his gullet! Tell him, with my compliments, that when I break a man he stays broke!"

Then he took to pacing again and I just kept quiet. In the room there was a heavy odor of flowers. Everything was quiet and kind of awesome except the sharp steps of Dan as he walked . . . and the hardness of his voice.

CHAPTER VI

"Didn't you just set the profit at seventy-five thousand dollars?"

IT WAS three months before I met Brennan. During that time I learned a whole lot. After the first few days, although Dan grew thinner and seemed to lose some of his fire, he managed to hide his feelings completely. Where women and young people were concerned, he seemed very kind and tolerant. When he got into the political racket and talked with men he was the same old Dan.

During that three months we got the Dan Rafferty Voters' League incorporated and I was elected treasurer. The only direct reference Dan ever made to the loss of his wife was after we got our Certificate of Incorporation. Then he said:

"I got some good plans for the future, Eddie. But right now I'll need a little time to think things over an' pull myself together. Till I get ready, you just work along with me. We'll see what we can do to get some sugar in the treasury."

So I did that.

The way Dan broke Freddy Creedon and kept him broke made Dan stronger than ever in the district. But it did more than that. It broke up the Blues entirely and though Dan never would give Creedon a break, he winked at me as he let all of Creedon's henchmen climb onto our band wagon. But it did even more than that. It strengthened Dan throughout the whole city because ours had always been what they called a pivotal district. Any candidate who lost in our district was pretty certain to lose in other districts. The way Dan broke Creedon and drove him out served notice on everybody that it was a waste of time and money to come into our district to fight him. This gave Dan tremendous power.

And not only that: It made his name known all over the State because every politician knew that Mike Brennan made the Ways and Means Committee because Dan Rafferty fixed the appointment. This showed that Dan had power not alone in his own party but in both the principal parties.

During that three months before we really started operations politically, I met every member of both branches of the legislature from our part of the State and there was not a city officeholder of any importance I did not call by his first name. I was not so smart then as I am now and I am not so very

smart now. But whenever I was in doubt, I mentioned Dan's name and it passed for brains.

The River Trust Company probably benefitted most by Dan's new powers. There was not a foundry, a factory, a mill, or a good-sized store in the district that did not carry a heavy balance in Dan's bank. Pretty soon Dan was elected Chairman of the Board after refusing to take the Presidency.

There were a lot of reports that used to come to Dan's desk from the bank and I always looked them over very carefully and tried to understand them. After a time I noticed that Dan was interested only in two of them. He would analyze at great length the operation of the Loan Committee, of which he was chairman, and he got regularly each day a list of the balances carried by the bigger companies. Once he said to me:

"Eddie, I don't know much about handlin' money an' I don't need to. I can hire a thousand men who can figger a nickel or a dime from here to Honolulu an' return. The big job in life ain't handlin' money . . . it's gettin' the money to handle. You want to be a specialist in that line. It is the same in politics. Never get yourself out on a limb so that you got to ask voters to do somethin' for you. You can hire a thousand men to do that, too."

You can see that I had a pretty good instructor. Being anxious to make good I did not bother Dan

very much asking questions. I had a pretty free swing at the bank so I went down there, found out who carried the biggest balances and then went right to them and put the bee on them for contributions, just as I had with my old boss. If I got too much of an argument, I would refer again to conduits and fire escapes, but as a usual thing the references did not have to be very broad.

I got to a point where I could walk in to a boss, pull out one of the drawers of his desk and put my feet in it and laugh and joke with him, finally telling him that Dan was having difficulty keeping the downtown organization from raising assessments or preventing the fire department from passing injurious regulations. Then I would say that Dan wanted the advice of the big men of the district, such as the guy I was talking to, on the easiest way to raise funds to maintain sound government there in the district. Doing that I got used to big words and cute phrases that sounded highbrow.

Before the three months was up I had gone on a flat salary of a hundred dollars a week and we had in the treasury eighteen thousand dollars. All the would-be politicians in town were breaking their necks to get my friendship and approval, feeling that if I said the word to Dan, it would carry a lot of weight. Anybody we wanted elected got away to a great start because we always played cozy with

the fellows who worked in the mills and foundries and they believed us where they would not believe the political orators that the opposition sent around as a matter of policy. Any time that we wanted to kill a candidate we just spread the word around that if he won, business would be bad because Dan would be afraid of the laws that might be passed and, therefore, as a banker, would not lend money to the mills and the plants where the boys worked. In that way business would be shot to pieces because bosses would not have money for operations. Very soon half the district would be out of work.

The bosses were ready enough to agree with us because Dan played with them. Although he made them pay some, they knew that was the best way out. With any of them that were prone to complain too much we had still another angle. That was Dan's insurance business. Dan had a way of getting adjustments on workmen's compensation that made the workers his friends for life. He also got quick adjustments for the bosses on liability and fire claims. But just as soon as they got nasty about anything, Dan would manufacture some kind of a flyer to put on their policy which either sent the premium way up in the air or decreased the company's liability under the policy so that the protection given was not satisfactory.

Of course there would be a howl over that and

then Dan would come in, like the good Samaritan, and fix things up for them provided they got back in line politically.

I worked that deal myself once. There was a poultry butcher who ran a market in our district for years. He made a fortune out of it. He was very ignorant and I have seen his wife, who was just as ignorant, slaughtering chickens in the back of their store. She was a big fat woman and she used to pin her skirt up over her petticoat and stand out in the slaughter room with a great, big tub of steaming water beside her and the floor all around her littered with feathers. I have gone back there more than once to talk with her and have seen her stand there in that atmosphere, her forehead covered with perspiration, her clothes all stuck up with feathers and her dirty hands loaded with diamonds.

In spite of their money they were pretty close-fisted and would not kick in for the Dan Rafferty Voters' League. One day I got desperate over this and made up my mind that I would get money out of them if I had to use a pair of platinum ice tongs. I found out that the River Trust Company carried a mortgage on their building and also that Dan had written their insurance. I went into the back room and stood around blowing feathers off my nose while I talked with the wife.

They were foreign people and every time I got

down to asking for money she forgot all her English. Every few minutes her husband would duck his head in from the store outside and speak to her in some foreign lingo and I know that I was cooking them plenty but I suspected that I was also being cooked some. Then I played the ace and just as soon as I spoke, all her English came back to her.

"Well," I said, "some people have luck enough, or work hard enough, to gather together a lot of buildin's an' diamonds an' yet they haven't brains enough to give them a headache. You're that kind. Through the bank Dan loaned you the money to buy this buildin' an' you made a small fortune on that. Also he wrote your insurance an' protected you there for the lowest possible cost. He's been your friend an' you won't be his. You can't expect that to go on forever.

"The reason I'm down here is because the bank wants a ten-thousand-dollar payment on their mortgage on account of the new fire regulations that are goin' through if Dan can't stop them. Just as soon as the insurance company heard of this, they got right after Dan with a rider for your policy. They claimed they didn't know you were boilin' these chickens in this back room an' had all these open gas fires around. They said they'd rather cancel the policy entirely an' not carry any insurance. But if

Dan wanted to keep the policy in force they'd have to double the premium."

If you ever have heard a fat woman covered with chicken feathers and diamonds moan, you know what I mean. No chicken she ever hit in the neck squawked as loud as she did. Her husband heard the commotion and came to the back room. I just stood around and laughed to myself while they went through some foreign alphabet with gestures. But I left them with five hundred dollars in greasy cash and a promise of five hundred more in thirty days. When I turned the money over to Dan and explained how I got it, Dan laughed for the first time since that day when his wife died. He laughed, too, until his big vest shook, just like it used to, and then it seemed to me that Dan was coming back to himself.

The eighteen thousand dollars that we put in the treasury that way also served to make me a business man for the first time. That came about through a contractor in our district who was friendly with Dan. He had laid some sewers down in Fourth Street and the way he put the pavement back was unsatisfactory to the people of the district.

About a month after his paving was done half the street sunk in like an old, used bed spring. Some of the papers criticized it and mentioned graft but like all of those things, nothing much happened to

the contractor. The street got so bad that something had to be done about it and Dan and the contractor met in his office. I was there with them.

"Any street is apt to sink in, Dan, no matter how good a job you do laying it," the contractor maintained, "if it's laid over a sewer. We gave them the best sewer job they have had in this town in twenty-five years. But a pipe line like that is bound to sweat a little bit and that dampens the earth around it and makes it more compact. It just settles down like a building or anything else. There isn't any way to change it unless you want to keep the street closed for sixty or ninety days before the pavement is laid. We fulfilled our contract to the letter."

"Well," Dan said, "let 'em howl for a while, Jim. You know how those things go. I'll put the squeeze on the Board of Aldermen in a short time to make them repave that street. You put in a bid for the contract an' make it high. Then Eddie an' me here will form a little corporation an' put in a bid under our name. I'll see that we get the contract an' you can do the work."

So that was what happened. We formed a corporation and I was elected President. I felt pretty big that day. I took fifteen thousand dollars out of the treasury of the Dan Rafferty Voters' League and deposited it in the River Trust Company to the

credit of the East Side Contracting Corporation. Then Dan fixed it up so that I was able to borrow fifty thousand dollars from the River Trust Company and that gave us quite a big working capital. After that, Dan wrote a bond through an indemnity company guaranteeing my bid to the city. Not only that, he was decent enough to give me half the commission he got for the writing of the bond. Then we put in our bid.

Dan and I went down around to City Hall and met some of the aldermen. We were just all good fellows together and went over to a speak-easy near the City Hall and had a few drinks. All the conversation was political and everybody wanted something. We all promised a lot of things we did not have to give but it seemed to work out all right and we got the contract.

The day the award was announced in the papers Jim, the contractor, came around to the office with a set of estimates as to what it would actually cost him to lay the street. He was wearing a big smile when he entered, but even I was surprised at the way Dan wiped that off his face.

"I don't think we can get away with the original scheme, Jim," he told the contractor. "I had a tough time getting this award through the Board of Aldermen an' they are gonna check up on us mighty close. I'm a little afraid to let your name

get mixed up with the job. I'm afraid it would cause scandal."

"Well, how do you figure to work it?" Jim asked.

"Well," Dan rumbled, "Eddie here is a very successful young fellow in the district an' he's been able to get himself unexpected capital. As long as he's got the corporation, the contract, an' the money to work with, he feels like he ought to be able to go ahead on his own."

I could not see just what Dan was working for, but I knew him well enough to take my cue, so I said, "That's it exactly."

Jim was pretty sore. "Then you stand to figure me out of the picture completely, don't you?"

"Well," Dan said, "at that, it ain't a very big contract."

"The hell, it ain't!" Jim growled. "On the set of figures you put in you can clean up seventy-five thousand dollars for yourself. . . . I don't like this racket, Dan. You told me to put in the high figure just to build up your own bid. I trusted you and did it. Now you're cutting me cold."

"What difference does it make whether you trust me or not?" Dan laughed at him. "I can have any bid you make thrown out. I don't want to start trouble over this, Jim, but business is busi-

ness. The situation has changed since we made the original deal. Then we talked a fifty-fifty split on profits. Now I can't see anything but seventy-five, twenty-five . . . an' that is provided you do the work. You know me well enough to know I want to be fair. . . ."

"You act like it!" Jim snapped.

"Well, wouldn't I be a grand sucker not to get the dough that's there for me?" Dan demanded. "Didn't I cover you up on this plaster-of-Paris street you laid? Didn't you make the grand clean-up on the sewer contract I got for you?"

". . . And didn't I pay you damned well for both of them?" Jim roared.

"Not half as well as you're gonna pay me for this one," Dan snapped.

"What do you think I formed this corporation for?" I asked Jim.

"Aw, you go to the devil!" he growled at me.

"I'll tell the cockeyed world," I answered.

"Take it or leave it, Jim, seventy-five, twenty-five," Dan said, his big fist banging the desk. "An' besides that: All your equipment has got to carry the name of the East Side Contracting Company."

"What can I do but take it?" Jim wanted to know. "I've got to take it."

"You're lucky to get it, too," Dan answered. "An' now let's figger a minute. Hey!" he hollered.

In answer to that summons, the scaly little guy from the outer office came in and Dan said, "Get me a paper an' some pencils."

The little fellow jumped like he had been shot and came back with paper and pencils. He laid them on Dan's desk. Dan swept a space on the desk clear with one shove of his big hand, then said:

"Figger what seventy-five per cent of seventy-five thousand dollars is."

The little old fellow started to figure, but Jim put up an awful howl. "What seventy-five thousand dollars?" he demanded. "How do you figure that way?"

Dan looked at me like an injured elephant. "Now can you beat that, Eddie?" he asked. "Here we got a lovely contract all buttoned up for ourselves an' just out of friendship an' decency I let this guy in for twenty-five per cent. Now he squawks an' I don't even figger the profit our way. . . . I take his word for it."

Then he turned on Jim. "Didn't you just set the profit at seventy-five thousand dollars . . . did I give you any argument?"

"No . . . but that was . . ."

"All right. Figger seventy-five per cent of that for our end. Then go an' lay the street and the

town pays you. What more you can ask I'm damned if I know!" Dan roared.

From that time on the Dan Rafferty Voters' League, with Dan owning one hundred per cent of the stock, was a going and a profitable concern. But the East Side Contracting Corporation passed out of existence that afternoon when the loan at the bank was cancelled and I drew a check for thirteen thousand odd dollars payable to the Dan Rafferty Voters' League and signed by the President of the East Side Contracting Corporation.

That was the way things went with Dan. One minute you were in the insurance business, then you were a banker, a little later on you were a contractor, but always you were a politician. And as a politician, Dan knew his onions.

On the strength of the clean-up we made on that contract, Dan gave five thousand dollars cash to an orphan asylum. In connection with that he worked on the newspapers so that they carried big pictures of Dan and a nice, sentimental story with a photostat picture of the check drawn on the River Trust Company, signed by the Dan Rafferty Voters' League with me as treasurer and Dan as president.

Four or five of the reporters were down in Dan's office and he slapped them on the back and served a quart of Scotch. Everybody got mellow over the

beauty of the sentiment involved in this gift. Dan made a long speech about how he felt toward the defenseless little children whose future had been blighted by an inscrutable destiny and how his heart warmed toward them and the privilege of having some small part in their future.

The reporters played this up big and several of them mentioned the recent death of Mrs. Rafferty and the softening effect this tragedy had had in the life of the well-known banker and political leader.

You can believe it or not, when Dan read that he cried so that the tears dripped right off his mustache. And that night I took Nellie down to one of the beaches and I told her that things were going great for me and that Dan and I were going to keep the district whipped in shape so that it worked to the benefit of the common people.

"Dan is a great guy," I told Nellie, "and very, very smart."

"He is, indeed," Nellie agreed, "and he's very powerful, too."

"I'll tell the cockeyed world," I said.

Nellie caught my arm and her fingers pressed the flesh there and she said, "Don't say that, Eddie."

"What?" I asked.

She said, "That."

"I'll tell the cockeyed world, you mean?" I asked.

She nodded her head and I said, "All right."

We came back from the beach in a bus and we talked a lot about Dan and about the boss out at the foundry and about things that a fellow and girl will talk about when they're out alone like that. I told Nellie she had the prettiest hands I ever saw and I thought her little bent tooth was swell. She did not mind and finally I held her hand and she sat close to me so that our shoulders rubbed together. It seemed to me that the trip from the beach was the shortest I ever took.

When we got to her house it was eleven o'clock but I went in. Mrs. Golden was still up and she made some sandwiches and a pitcher of lemonade. The three of us sat around the kitchen table and we told Nellie's mother what we had done all day. She was a fine old lady and she thought the world of Dan. "There ain't nobody no better," I told her.

"There isn't anybody any better," Nellie corrected me.

"O. K.," I said.

Mrs. Golden looked at us kind of funny, I remember, and smiled just a little bit. But I felt kind of small for not talking right in front of Nellie. When I left Nellie thanked me for the good time

she had and we shook hands and I held her hand again just like I did in the bus. She promised to go again with me soon.

The next morning I met Mike Brennan. He was down from the capital because the legislature was not in session. He came in and shook hands with me and sat down to wait for Dan. We had talked about fifteen minutes when all of a sudden, right out of a clear sky, he said:

"What's Dan going to do with you, Eddie?"

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Well, it's evident that you an' Dan are very close. I don't mind saying to you that you impress me also as a very smart young fellow . . . excellent political timber . . . excellent."

"Yeah?"

"Yes, indeed . . . and I know Dan well enough to know that he has not only great respect for your judgment and your integrity but also some sound plans for your future. It couldn't be any other way, Eddie, and I rejoice with you."

"You've got a pretty good line of bull yourself," I told him and we laughed together.

"I had a feeling," he said after a time, "that I would make a fight for alderman here next election, provided Dan is in accord with my idea. And it seemed to me that if I lent the weight of my support to Dan's candidate for my place in the legisla-

ture, Dan would see the wisdom of supporting me for alderman. Have you ever considered going to the legislature, Eddie?"

At that time I was not entirely over getting thrills about myself and I got one then. But I had sense enough to know that there was a lot more to Brennan's idea than I could see myself, so I just laughed it off and said, "Dan'll be in soon, maybe you can have a talk."

"But you would not be averse to my idea, Eddie?" Brennan insisted.

"Listen, Brennan," I told him, "I'm not the kind of a guy that goes to the legislature, an' you know it. When Dan comes in, put it up to him. He can change your mind quicker'n you ever could yourself."

The next time I saw Nellie I told her about the conversation and she seemed kind of pleased. She said, "It would be nice for you to go to the capital and represent the people, Eddie. Some of our biggest men have started as laboring men just like you did."

"Well," I said, "I'd like to go, Nellie, if it would please you."

"You do like to please me, don't you?" she asked.

"I'll tell the cockeyed . . . I mean, Great Scott, yes!"

CHAPTER VII

"Education don't do no hurt, but don't git so much of it you won't know nothin'."

THE first election that I went through with Dan was a mild one. No important office-holder came up for reëlection except the alderman of our ward and that was a push-over because Dan was satisfied with him and with what he had done on the Board. I know that Dan and Mike Brennan had one talk together. I guess they talked over Mike's idea of running me for the legislature and himself for alderman. Mike never mentioned it to me again and neither of us ran. From that I can make a pretty good guess that Dan did one of his quick changes with Brennan's mind.

The other party put up a candidate but all he did was post a few pictures of himself on telegraph poles and, as I remember, he made a speech or two. But everybody knew it was just a gesture. He had no chance to win.

Of course he knew that so he only spent about

three hundred dollars in his campaign and as a reward for that the leaders of the other party got him appointed to a job in the revenue department. So he came out all right. But in view of that situation the election was very quiet and Dan's candidates for supervisor, member of assembly and alderman went through without a hitch.

However, the election gave me a chance to learn a lot about how such things were done. It also strengthened me with the boys because Dan left it to me to appoint the election inspectors and poll clerks in the different booths in our district. There were about sixty of these and, as I remember, they got from four to nine dollars for the day's work. Naturally I appointed fellows who were kind of leaders in the different shops and that made them feel pretty big and gave me a better hold than I had ever had before. It showed them I had real influence.

All this time Nellie and I were becoming more and more friendly and, looking back, I can't recall a single day after I met her that I did not figure that some day she and I would be married. I guess I soaked up some of the confidence that Dan always had. It just seemed to me that whenever Dan and I started out after anything we were sure to get it. I felt that same way toward Nellie. It never occurred to me that I might get a surprise.

I mention this about Nellie because my association with her meant more than even I was able to understand. Every time I used poor English, Nellie corrected me. I guess if it had not been for her, I would have carried the rough-and-ready political stuff to extremes and probably always would have been just a fellow to go around putting the bee on bosses and throwing the bull to workmen. But, as you will see, Nellie was above that and from trying to be nice to and with her, my ideas changed and I began to appreciate things that were more cultured than just barrooms and outings and votes.

I do not want to take any of the credit of my little success away from Dan but what I say about Nellie is true. Dan it was who knew the tricks of the trade and he did not hesitate to use them. He got me into politics, guided me through the hardest part of political success, which is the early days, and without him I never could have got anywhere. It was Nellie, though, who kind of rubbed the rough corners off me and maybe polished me up a little bit so I could make a speech and appear among educated people without making too many blunders.

She never forgot that foolish conversation I had with Mike Brennan. She could not see anything queer or amusing in the idea of me going to the legislature.

"This is a free country, Eddie," she used to tell

me, "and the opportunity to go to the top is equally open to everybody. Abraham Lincoln was a rail splitter. Even Calvin Coolidge started life on a little farm in the Green Mountains of Vermont. There is no more reason why you shouldn't go to the legislature than there was why they shouldn't years ago. You ought to study and better yourself and then, with Dan in back of you, anything is possible."

Then it was that she taught me how to study. She told me what to read. Although it was pretty dry going at first and never did interest me much, I stuck to it just for her sake. I never will forget how happy she was when I really got interested in some stuff she gave me to read.

All of these things, I suppose, had their effect upon my ideas generally and all the time, while Dan's tricks were educating me in the school of experience, Nellie's quiet work was making me think along higher lines and maybe prodding my ambition to do better things other than just make money and help Dan run our district.

One of Dan's first lessons was never to talk much about what we happened to be doing and I always stuck to that, even with Nellie.

"It seems so strange, Eddie," she said to me once, "that you have no special place of business except Dan Rafferty's office and yet you are making so

much more money than you ever dreamed of before."

"Dan can afford to pay me," I told her. "I get lots of accounts for the bank and I sell a lot of insurance . . . also I am useful to him in politics."

"I suppose so," she answered. I could tell from her voice that she did not understand very well but she said nothing more about it because she did not want to appear ignorant.

One time at her home, her mother got out some books that Nellie's father had used to study up for his police examination. They had to do with city administration, fire prevention, crime detection, city planning, and lots of things like that. They were mighty good reading and somehow or other they interested me a great deal. I read every word of them.

I spoke to Dan about them and he nodded encouragingly. "Education don't do no hurt," he told me, "but just don't get so much of it you won't know anything."

I let it go at that and I thought Dan had forgotten the thing until one day well after the first election. Dan had written a letter to Mike Brennan telling him that he thought State appropriations should be made for certain activities in our town. The letter itself might have been written by any voter to any assemblyman but coming from

Dan there was enough written between the lines so that Brennan, if he knew which side his bread was buttered on, knew what to do. Dan thought the letter was pretty cute and I did, too. The scaly little guy brought it in and Dan read it aloud to me. When he had finished, he winked at me and said:

"Mike'll know what to do with that one, won't he?"

"I'll tell the cockeyed world," I said, and right away I saw Dan's eyebrows go up and he looked at me quickly and said:

"That's the first time I've heard you say that in months." Then I knew that Dan was noticing the improvement in my language.

I guess he saw that I looked surprised because he grinned that wide grin of his and his gold teeth showed and he just grunted, "Keep it up, Eddie, first thing you know you'll develop a lot of eloquence an' in politics that's damned important." He said it jokingly but I could see that it carried a lot of weight; that he really meant for me to go ahead and better myself. I liked him more on that account.

That very minute I promised myself that I would study up. That night, too, I promised Nellie I would and the next day she went out and with her

own money bought me a book called "Politics in City, State and Nation."

You can believe me that I certainly appreciated that, not alone because Nellie gave it to me, but even more because it was exactly the sort of thing I loved to read. I realized just as soon as I got into it that nothing ever would interest me as much as politics. Although I had to go and get a little dictionary in order to understand everything that was in the book, I did not find that was hard work at all. I guess I have a natural bent toward politics which showed itself even in those early days because, in the reading of this book Nellie gave me, I thoroughly enjoyed and easily understood the contrasts drawn between government in this country and that in the Old World.

Whereas we just threw our king out and started on our own with a new idea, the countries in the Old World, most of them, have kept their kings and gone ahead and governed themselves anyway. As a result of that, and the fact that they are very much older than we are and do not have so many Mike Brennans running around making speeches, there is not the room for graft that we have here.

This book showed up graft in a pretty bad light. It spoke of the millions of dollars that were being looted from the public wealth in every state, county, village, and hamlet in the United States.

There came to my mind right away all the things that Dan and I had done together to raise money for the League and for ourselves. Most of all I thought about the deal we had struck with Jim, the contractor, to put back that bum street he had laid.

It mentioned in the book that every so often a reform element asserted itself in all American politics and then investigations were rife and charges and countercharges flung back and forth between politicians until a scandal was born. But no matter how quickly the reform party got in, or how completely, the very structure of American politics soon brought about its own political collapse through the greed of officeholders and bosses.

All of that rather stuck in my mind because I did not like to feel that I was crooked. I figured I would be smart and without saying anything perhaps learn a lot.

I took the book down to Dan's office and, as casually as I could, I laid it in front of Dan suggesting that he read it. He jerked his head up and the ashes from his cigar fell on the book. He puffed out his cheeks and blew them off among the papers on his desk. Then he picked up the book and leaned back in his chair and hooked one foot in the drawer of his desk. He read the title of the book and wrinkles creased his forehead. He weighed the book in his hand, much as though trying to deter-

mine its value by its weight. Finally he laughed and his vest shook so that the heavy watch chain there danced up and down.

"It's kind of a good book," I said, "I thought you might like to read it, Dan."

For a minute he did not answer, just kept on laughing. I felt queer, knowing that he was laughing at me more than at the book.

"What's the idea?" I asked at last.

"Well, Eddie," he said, "if the guy who wrote this book knew anythin' about politics, he wouldn't have wrote this book. He would be in politics just like you an' I are in politics." With that, Dan burst out with that loud laugh of his and it was the second time I had heard it since his wife died. The windows seemed to shake and I had to join in with him. He tossed the book back on his desk without opening it. It landed with a thump and blew papers around.

"That may be all right," I said, "but I'll bet, if you'd only read it, you'd like the book."

He was still chuckling and I felt as though I had to defend myself a little bit so, like most suckers, I kept on talking. "He tells all about government in England an' France an' Germany an' Italy, an' places like that. . . ."

Dan sobered up like a shot when I said that. The smile was gone from his face and the old look was

in his eye. He picked up the book and looked at its cover. Then he took it in both hands and ran it open and shut like you do with the edge of a deck of cards. He seemed to be thinking. I kept quiet. After a minute he said:

"I suppose he jumps all over the grafters, don't he?"

"Well, he does, kind of," I agreed, "an' he seems to know what he's talkin' about."

"Does he jump on the grafters in business?" Dan demanded. "Does he say anythin' about the man who buys a pair of shoes for five dollars plannin' to sell 'em for ten dollars but slips 'em to a sucker for thirty dollars when he gets a chance . . . does he say anythin' about that, does he?"

"Well, not directly," I said.

"No, you bet he don't," Dan growled. "What's the difference between a man who makes a business of politics for profit an' one who buys for a little an' sells for a lot? Ain't we all got to live?"

I could see that I had Dan in a mood for arguing and any time you got Dan to argue you could learn plenty by just keeping your ears open. So I kind of prodded him along.

"He did kind of mention that," I explained, "an' he said that American business was just as grasping as American politics."

"Then why didn't he write his book about business?" Dan wanted to know.

"Well," I explained, "he said that a dishonest thing in politics need not be a dishonest one in business because in business a man is frankly out for the profit he can get an' he doesn't take any oath not to accept that profit. Whereas in politics he is not supposed to go into it for profit an' not only that, he takes an oath to serve the people an' serve them truthfully an' well."

Dan was sneering very broadly and I was afraid he might get sore at me so I finished up quickly, "I'm only tellin' you what he wrote, Dan."

"Yeah," Dan grumbled, "an' you half believe it, Eddie, or you never would've brought the book here an' you wouldn't be talkin' about it now."

"Not exactly that, Dan," I explained, "but it did seem to me to hit pretty close at us. I thought I'd feel easier about it if I could get your slant."

"You like me, don't you, kid?" Dan said genially.

"You bet I do, Dan. I'd go to hell for you," I said. I meant every word of it.

"An' you kind of think I'm pretty smart?" he continued.

"I know it, Dan," I answered.

"Well, then, you listen to me a minute. I'll give

you an angle on graft that no book writer ever happened to think of.

"You look back through the history of politics right in this town. If you do . . . an' you've got any sense, you'll see that there wouldn't be any town without graft. Every forward step in American government has been brought about indirectly through graft. Every bit of growth the town owns has come about because somebody in power made some money. Every beautiful park that this town boasts was made possible because politicians were able to steal half the original purchase price!

"If the day ever hits this country when politicians can't make money out of buildin' railroads, subways, parks, public buildin's, museums, an' layin' fine roads an' streets, then the creation of those things is gonna come to as quick a stop as a new Ford with a set of Lincoln brakes.

"Don't ever get away from that, Eddie. When there ceases to be money in politics, there will cease to be brains in politics, an' when there ceases to be brains, hell is gonna pop in this country. All the big public utilities, school buildin's, educational programs, good roads, service franchises, an' everythin' else that enables the people of this country to live better than they live in any other country in the world, will go plumb to the devil.

"Let this sap write a book about that!"

As Dan finished, he banged his fist down on his desk again and the book jumped. I picked it up and put it under my arm and kind of grinned at Dan. I said, "I knew you would have an angle on it. I hope you ain't sore."

Dan smiled at me and I saw his gold tooth shine. He stuck his cigar back in his mouth and puffed at it but it had gone out. I struck a match and held the flame to the end of the cigar. Dan puffed and looked at the end of the cigar and his eyes crossed and he looked funny. Pretty soon his head seemed to be floating in a sea of smoke but even before the match went out he was chuckling to himself again and he looked at the book under my arm. Then he took the cigar out of his mouth and grinned at me.

"Takin' it home with you, Eddie?"

I had to smile. "It didn't make much of a hit," I said.

"No," he said, "it didn't. An' I don't want it to make too much of a hit with you. After all, politics is a pretty human business, Eddie, an' it's a fair bet that the guy that wrote that book tried to get by in the game an' didn't have the brains to do it."

I didn't answer and he puffed at his cigar again and finally continued, "It's a funny thing, too. He's probably a good, smart fellow, but just has not got the right kind of brains. You can tell the world for me, an' that includes the newspapers, that

every real reform crowd that ever got into power made just one contribution to the public welfare. That was stagnation.

"If you are goin' to be a success in politics, Eddie, you've got to give it all your time an' if you give it all your time, you've got to make money. You've got a right to make money. Instead of worryin' when people holler about graft that comes your way, take a walk in any of the big parks an' see the poor kids there gettin' cool in the summertime. See the mothers from the tenement houses pushin' wizened, hungry-lookin' little brats through the only sunshine they'll ever get, an' then quit worryin' because you picked up a few thousand dollars in helpin' build that park. Just remember that if the guy that wrote this book had his way, maybe those same mothers would get a chance to read his book sittin' under a gaslight in broad daylight on the sixth floor rear of a smelly tenement house.

"Wouldn't a mother like that get a hell of a lot of consolation out of the fact that the public wasn't bein' robbed by a politician? She'd a lot rather have that feeling than a place to let her kids see trees an' sunshine an' grass an' cool water, wouldn't she?"

With that, Dan went into one of his uproarious laughs again and, to tell the truth, I really felt sheepish and kind of dumb. He puffed away at his

cigar again and looked through the smoke clouds and winked at me. I felt like a little boy who had been caught doing wrong. Dan did not rub it in too much, he was not built that way. He stuck out his hand and we shook hands. He said:

"Read all the books you want, Eddie, but always use your own brains. Lots of times I like to read things I don't believe at all, just to see what the other fellow's thinkin' and to know better how to go back at him. Readin' is the best thing a man can do if he don't believe everythin' he reads. That's what I meant when I said don't get so damned much education you won't know anythin'. . . . An' don't let this conversation get under your skin, Eddie, because right now I'm playin' the game with you all the way an' for just one-fifth of the salary that I'm payin' you, I can go out an' get me the pick of a thousand college graduates. I'm for you, kid."

I left Dan that afternoon with more ideas in one small head than ever a man carried before. I kept asking myself if Dan used me because I was just smart enough for his purpose or just dumb enough. But after all, it is fact that counts and not theory and I could not see where it made any difference whether I was being used for brains or lack of them, as long as I was being used.

I relate all this more to give you a picture of

Dan than to get into the business of political economy. I don't know of any one conversation in my life that had a greater or more lasting effect on me than this one with Dan. I do know that for the next three years, right up to the time, in fact, when Nellie and I were married and our first baby was well on the way, I relied one hundred per cent on Dan's judgment and guidance. He became to me in that time almost a father.

Perhaps the happiest hours of his life were those in which he helped Nellie and me get ready for our wedding. I know the happiest moment of his life was when, after we were married and had come back from our short honeymoon trip, Dan loaded us into his automobile and took us to the house we now live in. Everything was ready for us to come back to it and both of us could hardly wait to get back and get ourselves established.

Nellie's mother was going to live with us and it was all settled for her to move in while we were away and have everything ready for us when we got back.

Right on the front steps of that house Dan stopped us and with Nellie clinging to her mother and telling her how happy she was and what a fine trip we had and trying at the same time to answer Dan's question, big, old, hard-boiled Dan Rafferty reached into his inside coat pocket and with his

tough eyes swimming with tears, he handed Nellie the deed to the house.

Nobody can tell me that Dan Rafferty has not got a heart and that he isn't the best friend Nellie and I ever had. When we got inside the house that day, he took me by the arm and led me over to the buffet and there was some of Dan's best Scotch. With his own hand he poured me a drink. We stood there and raised the glasses and drank to Nellie's happiness and mine. When we had done that, I looked at Dan and said:

"Man alive, I don't know what to say to you! You've done too much, Dan. Where were you called upon to buy a house and lot for me? Everything I've got in the world I owe you, anyway."

He laid his big hand on my shoulder and shook me and reached for the bottle to pour another drink and kind of boisterously he said:

"Aw, jump in the lake, Eddie. What the hell! After all, it's only a fraction of another little pavin' contract!"

CHAPTER VIII

"Mothers are pretty much like that."

IT IS often true that just when a fellow is most contented and most prosperous he is in the greatest danger. By that I mean that things can come too easy for a man and he is apt to take them as they come.

It is a queer thing how storms can brew, so to speak, right out of a clear sky. Here I had a lovely home, a beautiful wife and a steadily growing bank roll, to say nothing of the prestige I was gaining in the district and, in fact, the whole city, and all the time, right where I should have noticed it first, right in my own home, the very deepest sort of trouble was in the making.

When I walked along the street, men met me and shook my hand cordially. My old associates all looked up to me as an outstanding success. My credit was good everywhere. No matter what happened in the district, whether it was business, politi-

cal or social, I was one of the first to know about it. People came to me for advice. Maybe all that made me too confident; too sure of myself and everyone else.

I was called on for a lot of favors and there were several times when I got real happiness out of doing things for other people. For instance, there was Mrs. Brophy who came to our house one night when trouble surrounded her. She sat in the parlor with Nellie and me and tears trickled through the wrinkles on her face while she told me about her son. She did not have to tell me much about him because I had known Jimmie Brophy ever since he was a kid. He had run with one of the gangs that hung around pool rooms and I had seen from the time he was ten years old that if somebody did not do something about it, Jimmie would find himself in a bad jam by the time he was twenty.

Mothers are pretty much alike. They are great martyrs in sticking to their boys after they have gone wrong but they are awful fools about not stopping them from going wrong.

Jimmie was one of three boys who had broken into a store and stolen some clothing and shoes.

"He ain't really a bad boy," Mrs. Brophy sobbed, just like every other mother has sobbed ever since there have been clothing and shoes to steal. "He is just mischievous an' easily led. You know every-

body, Eddie, an' you have lots of influence with the policemen an' the judges. I want you to get Jimmie out of this trouble. . . . I'm sure he's learned his lesson."

Well, I knew that Jimmie had not learned his lesson. I felt that probably the worst thing I could do for him was to show him how easy the law is to beat if you tackle it from the right angle. But I lacked the moral courage to deny his mother what she asked. To tell the truth, I got a selfish kick out of the chance to do something for the old lady and it did not hurt me any, to be equally frank, to look like a big fellow before Nellie. So I told Mrs. Brophy I would see what I could do.

I went to Mike Glavin, the judge, and put it right up to him.

"After all, Mike," I said, "it won't be the first time nor the last that things have been fixed, an' when this kid shows up in your court, I want you to remember he's a friend of mine an' give him a break. You can pull that well-worn gag about temperin' justice with mercy an' throw this kid out of court. There's none of us that are goin' to sprout any wings during the next twenty-four hours."

Glavin just laughed. I guess he was used to hearing such things from Dan. "All right, Eddie," he said, "I guess we can handle it. But you want to remember that if the kid gets as far as my court,

even if I throw him out, he's in a bad way. The charge is 'illegal entry' and that's a felony. I'll fix him up all right so that he won't do time for this job, but if you play my hunch, you'll go down and see Miller, the assistant district attorney. He can fix it before the kid is indicted. Then there won't be any criminal record. . . . Is there any dough in it?"

"Not a dime," I answered. "His old man is a dock walloper an' they're livin' from hand to mouth."

"Well," Glavin continued, "you'll find Miller a pretty good guy and if you put it up to him as coming from me, I think you can work it out okay. I wouldn't go to the D.A. himself if I could help it, because the higher you go the more you'll have to pay in favors later on."

I played Glavin's hunch and went to see Miller. I told him just what the situation was and I found him a reasonable fellow perfectly willing to play along with his friends.

"The big trouble with these things is that convictions are already too scarce," he explained. "When we get a smash case on a man, as we have in this instance, it makes good ballyhoo to see that he gets a stretch. However, if he's a friend of yours, I suppose we can fix him up. I'll see what I can do.

But take my advice and let this little rat know that he's getting a pretty big break."

It wound up by having the case against Jimmie Brophy nol-prossed. After that I went and had a good talk with the kid. His mother did some more crying, which mothers often did around our district. His old man walked up and down the room spitting curses through a stubble of beard that still carried the dust of the docks where he worked. Jimmie himself made a lot of promises and did a lot of thanking, but I had sense enough to know that he was just naturally bad and sooner or later would go over the jumps again. So when I got him in the hall on my way out, I pulled him aside and said to him:

"Jimmie, all this sob-sister stuff of yours don't click very big with me. I think you're a little rat an' never'll be anything else. I didn't do this for you, I did it for your mother. I hope to God you mean all these promises, but I don't think, in your heart, you do. I just want to tip you off right now that I will never go to the front for you again. If you ever get yourself into another jam, take my advice an' get on the lam out of town, because they got your number at headquarters. If you slip again, they'll send you up on both charges."

He swore through his tears that he had learned his lesson and began to talk to me about getting him

a good job somewhere so he could quit his bad associates and live straight. I laughed that off. I was right, too, because he is now doing eight years in the big gray house.

All this is somewhat beside the story except that it shows the sort of thing I was constantly mixed up in by reason of my association with Dan. It also shows the sort of home life I had because naturally Nellie knew of all these things when people called at the house to see me.

I have got to say for Nellie, though, that she was less sentimental than most women I know. She had the knack of reasoning a thing out for herself and while she was ready to do nice things for people, it was mighty seldom that she was ready to do foolish ones. But once her mind was made up she was obstinate; very, very obstinate.

However, it never occurred to me that there was anything between us that was not right out in the open and aboveboard. I was terribly dumb about that. I should have seen it growing in her but things were coming too easy for me. In fact, right after the Brophy incident, Nellie gave me as good an indication as a man ought to have required.

"How did you go about getting Jimmie Brophy out of trouble?" she asked.

"Well," I grinned tolerantly, "I just went to a few of the boys an' saw that he got a break." I

guess I had always figured Nellie as a kid and not very world-wise. Perhaps that annoyed her without my realizing it.

"I don't understand exactly what you mean by that," she answered. "What's a 'break'?"

"That's just slang," I explained. "It means that when things go right for you, that's a break. If they go wrong, it's a bad break. You know . . . it's just slang."

"But I don't see how you could change the laws covering burglary," Nellie insisted. That is the way she was obstinate.

I felt very tolerant toward her; felt as though she did not understand such matters and it would take a long time for her to master them. So I just said:

"I didn't change the laws, Nellie. I just went down to the district attorney's office an' explained that this was Jimmie's first offense an' he was a friend of mine, an' of Dan's, an' we would appreciate it if they would give him a break."

I paused there and glanced at her and she was looking at me with a very funny expression on her face. I stopped short and she did not urge me to continue, so we let the matter rest there. I promptly let the conversation slip out of my mind.

About a month after that, Dan collected something better than sixty thousand dollars on a land

deal. When that came off I got five thousand dollars cash.

With half my money I bought a new sedan as a surprise for Nellie. She certainly got a big kick out of it and I enjoyed taking rides with her. It was pretty nice to ride down past Rourke's place in the new car and see all the old boys around there and know that they were staring after me and saying things about the success I had made of life. I might see Flatfoot peeking over the wooden curtain by the window when I went by and I knew it would not take him long to spread the word.

The deal that got me the five thousand dollars was a cinch, too. There was a big factory down along the water front which had been in disuse for a number of years. The owners of the place had tried to lease it or sell it but the buildings were so far gone that nobody fell for that. However, they still kept the building insured through Dan. The premium was pretty high and one day, when I went to collect, the owners said that they did not think they would renew because the structures burned down would be just as valuable as they were still standing.

I repeated this to Dan. About a week later he told me he had been in touch with the owners and they had set a rock-bottom price on the property and would be glad to sell. It was quite a big place

so Dan started some commotion with the Board of Aldermen to buy it and make a tenement house park of it. That was the way he got the sixty thousand dollars and I got the five.

One night while we were riding, Nellie asked me about this deal because she wondered how I happened to get the car. But just the way she inquired left me faintly uneasy about answering.

"I tipped off Dan that the owners of an old factory building were anxious to sell," I explained slowly, "an' Dan sold it for them."

As nearly as I can recall, that was the very first time I ever lied to Nellie. Of course I really did not lie then but I did not give her all the truth. I did not say how or where Dan had sold the property. I had a feeling that she would find in the deal we had made something to criticize. She did not answer but I knew that she had noticed the way I dodged details. I tried to talk about something else but I kept an uneasy feeling.

When we got home I sat in the parlor reading. Nellie came in and sat on the chair beside me. She put her arm around my neck. Her fingers rumpled up my hair and she kissed me two or three times on the forehead. I have learned that whenever a woman does that, she either wants something or wants to find out something.

I was reading the evening paper. There had

been an accident on the elevated system and I immediately began to read about it out loud. I wanted to get her mind off what she was thinking. When I finished reading I said:

"You know, Nellie, people can't be too careful. What with all the automobiles, an' subways, an' elevated systems where they run trains fifty or sixty miles an hour an' carry thousands of people, you just can't be too careful.

"Some day when I have a chance, I'm goin' to start a campaign for safety in traffic an' on railroads an' places like that. Just think of all these poor people that are hurt. Lots of 'em will be unable to get back to work an' their families are bound to suffer. It's all right to talk about getting damages from the railroad but going after that sort of money is just like pushing feathers through a brick wall with warm butter. You get just about as far with it."

Nellie just kept twining her fingers through my hair. "It is a terrible thing," she said very slowly. I could see that her mind was not on the elevated accident.

Finally I put the paper down and looked at her and said, "Well, what is it?"

She kind of smiled a little and got up and walked across the room to get that book, "Politics in City, State and Nation." Without saying a word, she

opened it to two or three different pages which she had marked. Every one of them was about graft.

I read a few of the places where her marks were heaviest. They hit pretty close to home. There were remarks there about the graft in public institutions, buildings, highways, park systems, etc. Nellie, without saying a word, ran her finger along these places for me to read.

I am sorry to admit it but I flew off the handle. I realize now that it was because I knew Nellie was right. I had no defense to offer other than anger. Dan had always told me that whenever you charged a man with anything and he got mad, the best thing to do was keep right after him because you had him on the run. That is why all these people in the world who spend their time telling you how honest they are, are really the biggest crooks. They offer the only possible defense. But right then I forgot his advice and got mad because it seemed the only possible defense.

"What's the big idea?" I asked sharply. "Why hand me this stuff like a judge passin' a sentence on a crook?"

She did not answer; just pointed more with her finger. I could see that she had planned it all out and that made me even madder.

"You'd think I was a crook!" I growled. "Me an' Dan too! Why don't you say what's on your

mind? . . . After all, I'm workin' with Dan an' who is there to criticize either of us?"

Still no answer. Just that moving finger there on the pages of the book.

"You'd be a fine sort of girl," I exploded, "to criticize Dan Rafferty after all he did for you an' your mother! Not even you can criticize that man in my home. . . . You seem to forget we wouldn't even have this home if it wasn't for him!"

I went on like that for about five minutes and still Nellie was very calm. She just waited for me to run out of words and when I had, she said:

"Did I criticize Dan, Eddie?"

Well, of course she had not and that made it all the worse for me.

"You might just as well of," I blustered.

"Have, dear," she said, "not of."

"Well, all right," I grumbled reaching again for the newspaper. "How can you expect me to use good English when you get me all upset over nothing?"

She took the paper out of my hand and laid the book on my knee. I picked it up and slammed it down on the table. I stood up. Still without any show of anger, Nellie said:

"Is that a nice way to treat a present from me?"

Of course that licked me. In fact, I knew from the minute she had sat down on the chair beside me

in the first place, I was licked. But men will be fools; they will argue and bluster and storm. That is true especially when they are not exactly sure of their ground.

I apologized to Nellie and picked up the book and held it in my hand. She pressed me back into the chair but instead of sitting on the arm of the chair she sat on my lap.

"Dan is a lot older man than you, Eddie," she said quietly. "His training has been entirely different. I love him very dearly just as you do. I see in him a whole lot to be admired." She paused for quite a long time, then finished: "But you can say that about anybody. Someone in the world loves all our murderers, our thieves. . . . No matter how bad a man may be, somebody loves him and believes in him. . . ."

I looked up at her in amazement. "What are you doing," I asked, "classing Dan with murderers an' thieves?"

Nellie is the most persistent thing in the world when she is right, and she is most always right. She just kept plugging away at me.

"I never did until you refused to tell me the things you do with him," she said. "Now I hardly know what to think. When I asked you how you changed the law for Jimmie Brophy, you evaded the question. When I asked you where you got the

money to buy this beautiful new car of ours, you started to tell me, then stopped short and did not finish. . . . You seemed anxious to hide something . . . as though I would not like the truth."

"I told you the truth," I interrupted. "I hope you won't keep at me until you make me really mad. Dan Rafferty's the best friend a man ever had, Nellie. He took me out of the foundry an' put me into politics. Through him I got a good job! I got you; an' we've got a home. Without him, I'd still be foreman of that lousy cleaning floor an' you probably wouldn't know I was alive! What more could you ask of a man?"

Once again Nellie was quiet for a long time. I realize now that she was picking her words just about as carefully as a person ever did; and I realize now how much those words meant to her. But I did not realize it then.

"What kind of queer streak has got hold of you?" I asked. "You've never been like this before. I hope you aren't going to be one of those women that want to be the clinging vine and also the sturdy oak? My job is to make my way in the world an' get to be somebody so I can give you all the good things I want to give you."

Her fingers were playing with my hair again and she looked at me very tenderly and said:

"I'm not criticizing you, Eddie. I'm just trying to help you."

"I don't need any help," I complained. "I can't understand this whole thing. You've never been like this before. What the devil has got hold of you?"

She did not resent that at all. After a moment she said: "You spoke of the cleaning floor and how Dan got you away from that. . . ."

"I'll say he did!" I barked.

"Well, Eddie," she answered steadily, "I'd a whole lot rather have you foreman of the cleaning floor and working hard for your money than I would to have you the richest man in the world on money that did not belong to you."

"But, Nellie," I exclaimed, "where do you get the idea that the money I earn with Dan don't belong to me? I earn it, don't I?"

"I hope so," she said. "That's why I complain a little bit, Eddie. Every time I ask you anything about it, you never give me a complete answer. Other women's husbands have jobs and they do definite things, whether it's driving a truck or running a bank. Their wives always know where they are and everybody else knows where they are and what they're doing. With you, nobody knows. You have no regular hours and you never have any business to talk over with me. . . ."

All of a sudden I thought I saw a great light and I burst out laughing. I caught her in my arms and held her close to me and said:

"Good Lord, Nellie, you aren't jealous, are you?"

But I knew just as soon as I said it I had guessed wrong. Nellie was not jealous. She stammered a bit and worked hard for exactly the words she wanted but finally reached a point where she could speak her thoughts and after that there was no stopping her.

"You know, Eddie," she said, "you drifted off that cleaning floor gradually even though rapidly. After you met Dan it wasn't any time at all before you were working entirely with him and nobody thought about asking any questions. . . . I just wonder a little if we have been doing the same thing. Things have come so easily and we have been so very happy and successful that we have not asked ourselves any questions."

"Why should we?" I exploded. "If we were starving to death you would kick an' I could understand that. But what kind of a wife is it that kicks when her husband's successful?"

"It's a wise wife," she said slowly, "if she isn't sharing his success."

"You been readin' books," I scoffed.

"No," she said, "no, I have not been reading

books. But there is something else, Eddie, something you don't realize, and it's a very, very big something."

"Been hearing any strange sermons lately?" I laughed at her. No matter what I said, I could not shake her out of the serious mood she was in. She just shook her head no. After a second she said:

"Tell me all about this five thousand dollars you made."

"Well," I said, "thinking as you do now, you may misunderstand it. It may sound bad to you. But it really isn't." Then I told her the whole story. When I finished there was a hurt look in her eyes, not an angry one.

"Are there many deals like that, Eddie?" she asked.

"Do I get many five thousand dollars?" I grunted.

"I hope you never get another one like that," she answered.

"You'll get over those ideas," I assured her. Then, recalling my conversation with Dan, I said:

"Think of what that park will mean, Nellie, to the poor mothers around this neighborhood. Every time you go into the street you hold your breath for the kids that are playing there . . . motor trucks whistling by an' automobiles swinging sud-

denly around corners. . . . This park will give them a place to go."

"Yes," she answered, "that is true." But the hurt look did not go out of her eyes.

"Sure thing," I went on to sort of build up the idea with her, "you got to think about the mothers an' about the kids an' that's the only way those things can be done in this day of politics. Look on that side of it a little more. . . ."

Suddenly Nellie dropped her head on my shoulder and her arms tightened around my neck and I realized fully, then, how really worked up she was. For a moment I thought she was crying because her shoulders trembled. I took her arms and pulled them apart so that I could straighten her up and see her face.

Never, before or since, have I seen her look so beautiful. In her eyes there was the kind of a story that no words can tell. Her lips trembled and she said, "I am thinking of the kiddies."

I read the story in her eyes and I said, "Nellie! Do you mean it? Is it on the level, Nellie? Are we going to have a . . ."

She just nodded and her face was on my shoulder again. I shouted right out loud. "By Jupiter, we'll name it Dan! . . ."

That night when we were in bed and quiet, she said to me:

"I have nothing against politics, Eddie, nothing at all, if a man is openly a politician. I think it would be wonderful if our baby could be born with a father who was called Honorable. . . ."

The very first thing I said to Dan the next morning was to tell him the wonderful news. He shook both my hands and we fairly danced around his old oak desk.

"Dan," I said, "just as sure as you're a foot high, I'm goin' to name that baby Daniel."

He shook hands harder than ever and real delight was in his face. But all of a sudden he stopped and winked at me and said:

"Daniel's a hell of a name for a girl!"

It was half an hour before we got down to talking sensibly. Then as I told Dan the questions Nellie had asked me and all that sort of thing, the wrinkles came in his forehead again and I could see that he was worried. He said very little but what he did say seemed to me a lot.

"Women get the queerest notions," he muttered. "What a rotten break it will be if Nellie's goin' to turn out like that!"

That night on my way home I realized what I said a little while ago. Just when a man is happiest and most prosperous, he may be brewing the most trouble. Take me, for instance: While all the town was talking about what a successful young

man I was and what a smart one, the truth of the matter is I was really quite a sap. I was as sheltered as a mountain stream flowing through a cañon. On the one side, to make me prosperous and successful, I had Dan Rafferty. On the other, to make me contented and happy, I had Nellie. Then, out of a clear sky, I saw where either or both of those sheltering banks might slip away from me. This was due to no fault of my own. If either of them misunderstood the other, they would part. That would leave me alone and absolutely in the middle.

There are a lot of men in the world in just the same position and most of them think they are some pumpkins.

CHAPTER IX

"I don't think it's exactly honest."

NATURALLY, all of this came to my mind suddenly and left me both dazed and scared. Just as soon as I began to realize that maybe some things were stirring under the surface, I began to get suspicious of everything.

It seemed to me that Dan was quieter and did not talk so freely with me about things we might do in the future. I felt that he was not at all sure about Nellie and the effect she might have on me. I suspected that he was afraid to trust me as he always had in the past and a blind man could see that, from a business angle, this was about the worst thing that could happen to me. On that account I began to resent Nellie's attitude which, of course, meant resenting Nellie.

In that way I felt that one of my protective banks had already begun to slip away from me.

Of course my home life changed, too. Nellie

sensed that there was a change in me and I suppose just at that time she was in a nervous condition which served to magnify every little thing that happened. I think she was hurt because I talked even less about my business affairs with her. She never did understand that that was because I had less to talk about. I did not try to explain because I knew she blamed me and never realized that it was due to the fact that I got less from Dan to talk about.

The less I talked the less he did and then I began to see my other protective bank slipping away from me. Those were hard days.

It seemed so strange to me that the best friend I ever had in the world and the only woman I ever loved should be the cause of depriving me each of the other. I often wonder if that happens frequently in this world. The more I thought about it the more worried I became and the more resentful. Of course I was not much for any girl to marry but whatever I was, Nellie had it all and it did not seem fair to me that she should be the cause of anchoring me right at the starting line in life.

However, I had sense enough to know that the smartest man alive is not smart enough to play with other people's suspicions. And Dan was suspicious of Nellie and Nellie was suspicious of Dan. I figured there was only one thing to do and that was to bring them together and see that they had a good

frank talk. This was not as courageous on my part as it sounds because I had great faith in Dan's ability to make Nellie see things as I saw them. Going on that idea I determined to have him satisfy both Nellie and himself at the earliest possible moment. I wanted to hit while the iron was hot so I only let matters run for about a week.

One morning while I was shaving and Nellie was cooking breakfast, I called out to her:

"Say, kiddo, do you know it's about two weeks since Dan's been here?"

Because I listened so hard for it, I thought I caught a strange note in her voice when she answered.

"So it is. Time certainly flies."

"Well," I answered, "you know Dan likes to come out here and the first thing I do this morning will be to ask him to come out to dinner to-night. You call up Mrs. Brady an' have her come over an' fix some of that swell corned beef. We'll have a reg'lar old-time dinner an' a good long visit with Dan."

Nellie just said, "All right."

There was no punch in her words at all. I knew she did not care whether Dan came or not. Always in the past when I had suggested inviting Dan out, she would be all for it. She would come to me and talk about what we would have for dinner. She

would always pick out the things she knew Dan liked and I would have to help her decide whether to have peas or corn or carrots, or something like that. Now she just said all right. That upset me so that I cut myself on the chin. I could not stop the bleeding and I was late for breakfast.

Nellie came into the bathroom to see what was the matter. She put some salve on the cut and covered it over with a little piece of tissue paper. When she had finished, she looked into my eyes and kind of smiled in a queer way. I put my arm around her and kissed her and started to speak. She was not in a mood to talk. She just patted my cheek and said:

"Come, come. Hurry up. Wash the lather out of your ears and get out to breakfast." Then she left me and I hurried out to the table. We did not say much during the meal.

When I left, she went to the front door with me and kissed me good-by. I tried to appear as though nothing had gone wrong.

"Don't forget to get Mrs. Brady," I laughed, "and have plenty of corned beef because I can just see Dan now throwing back his ears."

She smiled that same queer little smile and I walked off down the street. You can believe me that I was some worried. Dan was too smart to be fooled about what Nellie was thinking of him.

And Nellie was not smart enough to realize that what she was thinking might ruin my whole future. But I stood pat and when I walked into the office I put it right up to Dan.

"Listen here, Dan," I said, "you haven't been out to the house in two weeks."

Dan looked kind of surprised but I had a feeling that he was only pretending. His voice lacked sincerity when he answered:

"By George, that's right, Eddie. Gee, that seems a long time, don't it? How's Nellie feelin'?"

"She's feeling pretty good," I told him, "an' she's planning on you for dinner to-night . . . corned beef."

"Hot dog!" Dan grunted through a grin, "corned beef, eh? That little girl knows what I like! I sure would like to come out an' eat some of it, too. But the truth is that . . . "

"The truth is you are coming out," I interrupted him. "You are the best friend I got in the world an' something's gone wrong between us during the last two weeks . . . ever since I told you about the baby coming along. . . . An', Dan, it's got to be straightened out."

He looked at me, his eyebrows lifted high and his lips apart so that I could see his gold tooth. This time I knew he was faking his surprise.

"What the devil you talkin' about?" he sputtered.

"You know what I'm talking about. You know mighty well, Dan, that we haven't been as close for the last two weeks as we usually are. The thing is worrying me sick. I want you to come out to the house to-night for dinner an' spend the evening."

"All right," Dan said slowly, "all right . . . I will. . . . How long is it since you've had a talk with Reynolds?"

In that way he changed the subject and we switched to business things. Reynolds was a druggist who ran a store near our office and he used to sell quite a lot of liquor on the side. He was always anxious to keep on the good side of Dan. Now and then I would drop into his store and buy a cigar. I never really put the bee on him at all for money because, after all, his was a kind of piker graft and he was never slow about kicking in with fifty or a hundred dollars for the Dan Rafferty Voters League.

When I dropped into his store that day he called me back into the prescription department and we had a drink together. He asked about Dan and about Nellie. We just visited about such things for a little while and then we had another drink.

When I turned to go, he smiled and handed me an envelope.

"Ask Dan if he would mind if I throw that into the pot for the Voters League," he said.

"Oh," I answered, "thanks. Dan'll appreciate it."

"That's O. K.," Reynolds answered. He was grinning broadly. "No receipt is necessary, Eddie. . . . We understand each other. . . . "

He had never spoken quite so broadly before. When I got outside I ripped the envelope open and dropped it into an ash can. There were two new fifty-dollar bills inside it, which I slipped into my pocket without very much thought. However, as I walked along, Reynolds' words came back to me and I realized that always before when he gave one hundred dollars it had been in one bill. Then the real meaning of his talk came to me. He had slipped the two bills in so that I could take one of them for myself if I wanted it.

Such a thought never had entered my mind. I would not have done it under any circumstances. Just the idea of cheating Dan made me mad enough to fight. But out of that little incident I got a whole lot. I wished with all my heart that Nellie could realize the difference between dishonesty and legitimate graft and I promised myself that I would tell her just how things had happened and let her

see for herself that I was just as honest as she was.

However, I could not do much that day because my mind was centered on the dinner and the evening to come. The whole thing was easily doped out. Nellie had something in her mind; very deep in her mind. It was something critical of Dan and my association with him. I was not big enough to get it out of her mind.

Dan knew just about what the situation was and he had tried to dodge the issue by not coming out to the house. That proved where he stood but when I insisted, he was too game to quit. Now the whole thing hinged on whether or not Dan was big enough, or smart enough, to get suspicions out of Nellie's mind.

In other words, to go back to my comparison of the mountain stream flowing between two banks, I stood right on the brink of a very high falls and I was absolutely defenseless against the action of either bank. If one of them went wrong, the other was bound to. The result would be that I would find myself unhappily married with a little one on the way and no possibility of anything but a return to the cleaning floor for low pay and hard work. To save my life I could not think of any way for me to fight off this thing.

I realized that to give up one meant to give up both. In other words, if it came to a break between

Nellie and Dan and I stuck with Nellie, I would lose her in the end anyway because she would continually worry about causing the break between Dan and me. She would always think that I resented it, even though I did not and before long we would bust up, too.

On the other hand, if I stuck with Dan, which I knew even then I never could do because I could not leave Nellie, he and I would be bound to bust up because he would feel that he had made me unhappy. So there I was. The fine, upstanding, successful politician in the district was absolutely out on the end of the limb with two saws at work in the hands of other people.

That was why I got home about half-past three and tried to get Nellie into good humor so that maybe after all Dan would not notice anything and we could go back to the old basis. But I did not get much chance to talk with her because Mrs. Brady was there and the odor of corned beef showed that they were both busy in the kitchen.

I went out there and tried to get Nellie away from the hot stove and all the walking that seems necessary to put together a dinner like that. For a while she came into the parlor with me and rested but I could not keep her there long. Whether it was worry over the meal or just because she did not want to talk with me, I did not know.

Dan was not due at the house until about six o'clock. Just to keep busy I went in to wash up and change my suit. In the bathroom mirror I saw there was a scab on my chin where I had cut myself that morning. I tried to pick it off. That started the cut to bleeding again and I was kind of glad of it because it kept me busy and away from thinking about the evening. All the time I could hear Mrs. Brady fussing around out in the kitchen.

She was a very fat woman whose husband had been killed while working as a switchman on the railroad. I guess she was able to live all right, but she was always complaining about the cost of things and always willing to go out and get a meal for the neighbors and so earn a little toward paying her expenses.

Nellie always said that the few dollars she got this way meant a lot to her but I kind of figured that if she did not love to cook corned beef and such things, she would not have done it. It was just because she could cook things so well that she liked to do it. I always made it a point to tell her how good her food was and I kind of liked her, too.

Then I got to worrying about whether she would stick around while we were eating. Like most old women who spend a good deal of time alone, she took advantage of every opportunity to talk. I

did not want to have anybody there that night but Nellie and Dan and myself.

I was as nervous as a girl in a wedding license bureau and I saw myself getting as broke as the fellow that would be there with her. A thousand different schemes came into my mind about how I would start Nellie and Dan to talking about the work I did for Dan. Every one of them looked good at the start but the more I thought about them the worse they got.

Finally, Nellie came to the door and told me it was five thirty and I better be dressed to receive Dan because she would have to clean up and dress, too. I fixed my tie and went out and sat on the front stoop to wait for Dan. When he came along he was carrying a great big box of candy for Nellie and I realized that I never thought of those things because I had never brought home a box for her.

I supposed she would rather get it from me than from Dan. Most women like to think that their husbands think about nothing else in the world but them. I suppose that is a good hunch for a man to play if he wants to keep peace in the family. I should have known that too because once Dan told me that a woman would rather have a broken lead pencil as a gift from the man she loves than an eight-day Grandfather's clock that would grow pansies from anybody else.

We went inside. "Where's Nellie?" Dan asked.

"I guess she hasn't finished dressing yet. She'll be out in a minute."

"Well," he laughed, his voice booming again and the big chain on his vest shaking, "a minute's long enough to have a drink, ain't it? I want to tell you right now that I been smellin' corned beef for the last three blocks, an' for a smell as good as that a man ought to sharpen up his appetite a bit."

Dan was in a laughing mood, but it seemed to me that all the laughing was with his lips. He knew as well as I did that he had something to face with Nellie that night and he was not letting down a bit. He was all politician.

We went out to the buffet and while Dan poured the drinks I fished the two fifty-dollar bills Reynolds had given me out of my pocket.

"Oh, yeah," Dan said as he took them. They were crisp new bills and they crinkled. It almost seemed to me that they were trying to tell Dan how honest I was about them. He grinned at me over his glass and I saw his tongue run along the bottom of his gold tooth. Maybe the crown was wearing out a little and getting rough.

"Well," he grunted, "may your hair never fall out!"

"Yours, too," I said jerking my glass upward. ". . . I mean, here's good luck."

We grinned at each other and winked and drank the liquor straight. I reached for the decanter to pour Dan a chaser. He laid his hand on my shoulder and winked at me solemnly. "Never mind the water," he said, "just leave me get a deep breath of this corned beef. That's chaser 'nough."

The house certainly smelled of corned beef all right but it was a good healthy smell and made me feel hungry. Jokingly I said to Dan, "I don't mind the smell so much, Dan, but it kind of gets in my eyes."

He roared with laughter again and reached for the bottle to pour another drink. "Here's something for your stomach," he said. "Never mind your eyes because you don't have to look at this to see that it's good."

We laughed together and as he poured the drink, Dan said: "After a hard day two of these things strained through corned beef go pretty big. We better finish 'em up before Nellie comes in."

We clicked our glasses and drank the second drink. Dan was a peach. If it had not been for Nellie, I would never have had any trouble with him. We put the bottles and glasses away and walked back into the parlor. There was a big easy-chair there that Dan always called his own. He went right to that and sat down. He stretched his feet out in front of him and rested the palms

of his big hands on his stomach. He looked very comfortable and the way he grunted convinced me that he was.

"Reynolds pulled a funny one on me to-day," I said, after getting Dan an ash tray and a match for his cigar.

"Yeah?" he queried.

"Uhuh. I went in an' had a drink with him back in that back room of his an' he asked after you an' Nellie. We didn't talk about anything in particular. Finally we had a second drink. When I went to leave he slipped me a plain white envelope. He told me not to bother with any receipt either from you or from me. When I got outside I opened the envelope an' found the two fifty-dollar bills in there."

I paused for a moment and Dan just raised his eyes to look at me. There was a very faint wrinkle about the corners of his mouth. I grinned.

"You get the idea, Dan," I finished. I turned away from him and went across the room and sat down. I fished for a cigarette and Dan watched me and said:

"Want a cigar, Eddie?"

"No," I answered. "Dinner'll be ready pretty soon."

We sat quiet for several minutes and Dan patted his stomach and chewed thoughtfully at his cigar.

Finally he straightened a little in the chair, looked at me and laughed.

"It's nothin' new to me to learn that you're honest, Eddie," he said. "But it is kind of interestin' to learn that Reynolds ain't."

That was all that we said about it. I had mentioned it to Dan only because he might want to use it on Nellie later on, but before I got a chance to mention that, Nellie came in.

Dan jumped to his feet and spread his arms wide for her. She was smiling and I could see her little bent tooth. Her eyes seemed brighter than usual. She walked across the room and stood on her tiptoes to kiss Dan as he bent over her. He folded his big arms around her and she looked mighty small and dainty.

"By Golly," he boomed at her, "it's a long time since I've seen you! Too long a time." He held her close in his arms, kind of swayed her back and forth. His big right hand was patting her head and pressing it against his own chest. It made me mighty happy to see them that way. Nellie did not say anything and Dan went on:

"You know what your old Uncle Dan likes for chow, too," he boomed. "Sure, it's a meal just to come into the house an' take a smell of it." He laughed uproariously at his own joke. It seemed

to me his manner was a little forced. I hoped Nellie wouldn't notice that.

Still holding her close, Dan lowered his voice and said:

"An' it's some great news you had for us the other day, darlin.' My land, it don't seem but a few months ago when you was cuddled up in your mother's arms so small you couldn't walk. I can remember how proud your father was! But I guess he had nothin' on Eddie here."

I could see Nellie's ears and she was blushing but I knew what Dan said made her happy. I was beginning already to hand it to Dan. Finally he pushed her back at arm's length and looked at her from tip to toe. It was easy to see that he loved her.

"You little darlin'," he crooned at her, "you're the prettiest thing in town, an' the nicest."

I kept wondering how much fighting Nellie would do with him after that. I kind of felt inside that I wished I had the blarney that was Dan's. But Nellie was not very much confused after all. She just laughed and freed herself from his big hands saying she had better go out to the kitchen to see what was being done to feed two hungry men. When she had gone, Dan turned to me.

"You're a lucky spalpeen; the luckiest in town," he said.

When we sat down at the table I made Dan be the father. It was a little warm in the dining room and Dan did not hesitate to take off his coat. He sat there at the head of the table and talked like a ten-year-old kid. Mostly he talked about the food and how wonderful it was to have a home like ours. He never missed a chance to pay Nellie a compliment, although probably the biggest compliment he ever paid anybody was the way he ate Mrs. Brady's corned beef.

For me it was an uncomfortable meal. I could not wait for Nellie and himself to get started, yet I dreaded the moment they did start. Dan was the hail-fellow-well-met all through the meal and he kept up a running fire of conversation that prevented anybody else from saying much.

It was after the meal was over and we sat down in the parlor, all of us so full of food we could hardly move, that Dan himself, much to my surprise, brought matters to a head. Right out of a clear sky he turned to Nellie and said:

"You an' Eddie are doin' very well, ain't you, girlie? You're happy?"

"Why . . . of course," Nellie answered, "of course we're happy. . . . "

"An' nobody knows better'n you, Dan," I cut in, "that we're doing well. That part of it is your fault."

He just laughed tolerantly and beamed on both of us. "Anythin' more I can do?" he challenged Nellie. "There's nothin' worryin' you that I might be able to straighten out . . . nothin' you need that I might furnish? . . . "

"No," she said slowly, "no, Uncle Dan . . . I guess not."

"The way you say that makes me think there is somethin'," Dan snapped. I did not know whether Nellie could see the change in him or not, but I could. His lips were smiling but his eyes were set and hard and there was a squareness about his chin that appeared only when he had made up his mind he was going after something.

"You got the best doctor an' everythin' like that, haven't you?" he wanted to know.

"Yes, indeed," Nellie agreed.

"Well," he said, "you can't fool your old Uncle Dan like this. There's somethin' on your mind, child. What is it?"

Nellie glanced at me and I thought she had lost her nerve and was afraid to talk with Dan. From somewhere I got a whole lot of courage. I guess it came from the thought that if my worries were not settled right then, they never would be. I did not want to go through another two weeks like the past two.

"Nellie is worried, Dan," I said. My own voice

sounded hollow to me. "She's worried about me. I told you about that. . . . It was Nellie gave me that book, 'Politics in City, State and Nation.' It was Nellie made me read it. I got little Jimmie Brophy out of a jam the other day an' Nellie don't quite like the way I did it. . . . When I brought home that five thousand dollars we made on the factory sale, she didn't like that very much, either. . . . "

"It isn't exactly that, Eddie," Nellie interrupted me. But right away Dan interrupted her and I thought to myself that if she knew him like I did, she would know enough to watch her step.

"Yes, it is," he barked, "it's just exactly that! Now you let me ask you a couple of questions, Nellie." He was almost glowering at her. He paused a moment and said, "An' you answer 'em, too . . . if you can."

Nellie folded her hands in her lap and her little chin set square and she looked Dan right in the eye. She was ready for anything but she looked awfully small and delicate compared to Dan. Dan cleared his throat and began:

"You're bothered because you don't understand these things. Ain't that the truth?"

"Yes," Nellie said simply.

"O. K.! Now for the questions: When Eddie bought that new sedan, where did it come from?"

"From the dealer's store," Nellie said.

"How did it get to the dealer's store?" Dan then barked.

"Why . . . it was sent there, I suppose," Nellie answered.

"Who sent it?" Dan was barking his questions and was not giving her a chance to finish one answer before he shot another question.

"The people who built it, I suppose . . . or the people he bought it from," Nellie answered.

"How many cylinders has it got?"

"Four . . . six, I guess. . . . I don't know, perhaps it's eight."

Dan laughed sharply. "Do you like to ride in it? It don't ruin the riding because you don't know a damned thing about it, does it?"

"No-o-o," Nellie said dubiously.

"All right," Dan went on. "That sedan cost you about twenty-five hundred dollars, didn't it?"

"Yes."

"What did you do with the other twenty-five hundred dollars from that check?"

"Left it in the bank."

"How did it get in the bank?"

"Why, we just deposited your original check. . . . Then, when Eddie bought the sedan, he drew a check against that."

"I see," Dan went on. He was grinning now.

"Then the truth of the matter is that Eddie never had any real money in that bank? He just put in a slip of paper . . . a check?"

"Why, of course, but . . . "

"Well, how could he buy the sedan an' still have twenty-five hundred dollars in money when all he ever put in was a slip of paper?"

"The slip of paper was your check."

"Of course it was. But it was on The River Trust Company, wasn't it? I had no money in The City Bank where Eddie deposited my check."

"I don't see what that's got to do with it," Nellie said slowly.

"It's got this much to do with it," Dan barked. "How could The City Bank give the automobile dealer twenty-five hundred dollars for this automobile an' leave twenty-five hundred dollars in money in Eddie's account just on a slip of paper drawn on another bank?"

Of course I could see that Dan was just cross-examining Nellie and trying to knock her off balance. I sort of hoped he would do it, too. Nellie could see it, too, and she was trying to think out each answer, but Dan would not give her time.

"Well, how could it?" he insisted when she hesitated.

"Your check was good," she said. "The River Trust Company would pay them."

"Nachally," Dan growled. "What I'm askin' you is, how does The River Trust Company get the money over to The City Bank. Do you think a messenger runs over an' cashes every check?"

"Certainly not. . . . "

"Then how do they get the money? You can't live on checks forever." Dan was leaning forward now and almost glaring at her, although there seemed to be nothing really angry in his attitude.

"I don't exactly know that," Nellie admitted.

"But because you didn't know," Dan went on emphatically, "didn't prevent you from takin' the car, did it? It won't prevent you from usin' the twenty-five hundred dollars, will it?"

"Why, no, but I think that is different."

"How is it different?" he asked. "Let me set you straight on this, colleen. It's the things you don't know that never hurt you. Your trouble right now is that you're tryin' to understand everythin' Eddie does. You want to know every detail an' you just nachally can't get away with it. Women ain't made for business. I admire you for takin' a big interest in Eddie an' in his progress through life, but I warn you now . . . an' I'm a lot older'n you are . . . don't let your interest an' your curiosity be a millstone around his neck."

When he said that, Nellie went white. Her lips were just a straight line across her face. But she

kept her head and when she spoke, she controlled her voice, although it was strained.

"I don't think I will ever hold Eddie back much," she said quietly.

I was feeling pretty nervous, so I butted in. "Nellie kind of thinks," I said to Dan, "that all the other women around here have husbands with regular jobs an' they, an' the neighbors, know just what they do. . . . "

"Do they?" Dan interrupted. "All right. What does the President of the bank do, Nellie?"

"He runs the bank," Nellie said.

"Sure. Eddie, here, runs the Dan Rafferty Voters League. So that's even. Now what does he do, this President, while he's runnin' the bank?"

Of course that stopped Nellie and I began to have hopes she would see it from Dan's angle. I could see that Dan was pretty well pleased with himself, too. He laughed in a good-natured tolerant way and got up and walked over to Nellie. He chucked her under the chin with his big finger and kind of laughed at her like she was a child. I think that angered her. She said:

"Now, Uncle Dan, maybe I could ask you a few questions." That kind of took his breath away. But he said:

"Sure . . . sure thing. Shoot!"

"Do you operate a real estate business, Uncle Dan?"

"Real estate?" Dan repeated. "Me, in the real estate business? No."

"Did you own the factory that you sold when Eddie made that five thousand dollars profit?"

"Yes," Dan snapped, "certainly I owned it."

Nellie bit her lip and looked at me. For a minute I, too, thought Dan was lying. There was a second of silence, then Nellie went on.

"How long did you own it before you sold it to the city?"

Dan said, "Ten days."

"To be perfectly honest, Uncle Dan," she said, "you had it sold to the city before you bought it, didn't you . . . and at a great big profit?"

"Certainly!" Dan exploded. "Is there any difference between buyin' land at one price an' sellin' it at another, an' buyin' shoes at one price an' sellin' them at another?"

"That's just the question," Nellie said kind of hopelessly. "Personally, Uncle Dan, I think there is, if a man has influence to sway unfairly those who buy from him. It worries me a lot to have Eddie mixed up in that sort of thing. I would not be fair to you or to Eddie if I did not say so. I don't think it's exactly . . . honest."

Something inside me seemed to catch fire when

she said that. I whirled toward her and said: "That's a fine thing for you to say, Nellie! 'Specially to Dan. He's known you an' he's protected you since you were too young to walk. He took care of your mother when your father died. . . . An' it was money that came through Dan that educated you. . . ." I had to stop because I was so full I could not put my feeling into words. Nellie was just as white as a sheet. She said:

"I admit all that. But he did not educate me to do wrong."

"Wrong be damned," Dan grunted. Then suddenly he burst into that wild laugh of his. He put his arms around both of us and said, "Come, come, children. You're both just kids. You forget all this squabblin' an' leave matters to your Uncle Dan."

I was all in favor of that, but not Nellie. She said, "No, we've gone this far and we might as well finish. If we don't come to a clean understanding, each of us is sure to carry a grudge against the other. Eddie feels that I am unjust for thinking as I do. He thinks I am ungrateful. I want to straighten that out.

"In the first place, I had nothing to do with the way you helped me, Uncle Dan. You were very kind and very generous and I hardly know what might have happened without you. But at the same

time, you did it all of your own volition. . . ."

"Of course I did," Dan interrupted. "Why keep talkin' about it?"

Nellie did not pay any attention to the interruption. "You arranged a pension for my mother," she went on, "and I know that your door has always been open to my mother when she wanted advice or help of any kind. I will never cease to appreciate that. But when you undertook to do a charitable and fine thing you did not do it selfishly, did you? It was not your idea that I should always do exactly and think exactly as you wanted me to?

"The only appreciation that I could ever show for what you did was to make the most of every opportunity you gave me. I have done that. I did not fail you. From the time I was nineteen years old, I have supported myself and my mother. I don't see how a girl could do more and if you were sincere in what you did for us, you certainly must agree with me, Uncle Dan.

"I cannot repay all you did. You knew when you began that I never could. You just had to be repaid by the knowledge of your own kindness. . . . I've been a good girl, an honorable one. I've shown my appreciation by making the most of the chances you gave me. Surely kindnesses done me when I was an infant are not now mortgages on my whole life!"

It was getting a little too deep for me and a glance at Dan convinced me it was too deep for him, too.

"I ain't got any kick coming," Dan said thoughtfully. "I should say I haven't. I don't see what brought all this up."

Nellie went to him and caught her hands on his arms. "I'll tell you what brought it up: I don't think Eddie is actually earning the money he gets. I think already he shows the results of having things come too easily. The way he goes around the district here and meets and talks with people and gets money without any visible effort is causing talk. The neighbors notice it and I know they do. They wonder about it.

"I'd never in the world do anything to interfere with Eddie and I am not thinking about myself. . . . There'll be another pretty soon, Uncle Dan . . . another that will mean more to me than all the rest of the world combined. . . . I am thinking of that other.

"Perhaps I am young and foolish but I want my baby born into a world where people will respect it. Right now Eddie is a good clean fellow and if he will study and work he can better himself a lot. I have no objection to his staying in politics but I want him to work. I want him to do something. A man in public life should be on the stage,

so to speak, out where people can see him and see what he does. When nobody knows what a man is doing, everybody thinks he is doing wrong."

She went on like that for about ten minutes and it seemed to me that she dragged every word she said right out of her heart. Just her sincerity impressed Dan as much as it did me. Finally he put his arm around her and drew her close and interrupted her:

"All right, honey," he said to her, his big hand patting her shoulder, "I guess I see what you mean. Just let your Uncle Dan tell you once again that Eddie's done nothin' to be ashamed of. I had my plans for him but after all your happiness ought to come first an' I'll change those plans."

When he said that I almost fell through the floor. The idea of me trying to make a living without Dan was something I could not stomach at all. My mouth went dry and I tried to speak to him. Before I could say anything though, he had drawn Nellie close to his big chest again and was looking at me right over the top of her head.

"Yes, sir-ee!" he said to her, while over her head he winked at me, "we'll fix this thing up all fine. If it will make you any happier to have Eddie out on the stage, as you say, that's the way Eddie will be." He laughed again and patted her shoulder.

"How about it, Eddie?" he said to me, winking again.

"You bet," I agreed, "you bet, Dan. Whatever you say."

"You mean, Uncle Dan," Nellie said, her voice muffled by the folds of his coat, "that Eddie can come right out in the open and run for office and, if he is elected, really serve the people?"

"That's exactly what I mean," he said, "an' more than that, if I say so, he will be elected."

I thought of Mike Brennan right away and also of Flatfoot. They both had said to me at one time or another that I would some day be running for office. I had laughed at the idea then.

"Do you mean it, Dan?" I asked him finally.

"Certainly, I mean it," he boomed. "We'll talk this thing all over to-morrow. Personally, I think you ought to go to the legislature first, Eddie."

That was a little too much for Nellie and, like women often do, she started to cry. She was a little ashamed of herself and left us then. But before she went, she kissed Dan's cheek and explained that she would be back in a few moments after she had washed away her tears.

When she was gone, Dan looked at me. He took a deep breath and blew it through his lips with a whistling sound.

"Good night," he grunted. "Don't women git

the damnedest notions? Now you got to go to the legislature, I suppose, till after this kid is born. But never mind, Eddie, we can work the same that way. Cheer up, everythin' will come out all right."

CHAPTER X

"There's only two things a man can sit in front of a fire with. The other's a dog an' it can't talk or cook."

THAT was the way the evening which had caused me such a whole lot of worry passed and it seemed to settle things so that the worst of my fears died. That is to say, it arranged so that I could go along with Dan and keep Nellie too. That was a vast relief to me.

There were several things, though, which left me kind of gasping for air. The first, of course, was this business of going to the legislature. I do not think there is a man alive who would not get sort of a thrill out of that. For me, it seemed impossible.

To Dan's credit, be it said, I never once questioned my election if he was behind me. I knew full well that if he said I went to the capital, I went. And he had said that. He had promised Nellie. It naturally followed that my mind stuck along that groove and I weighed possibilities.

It meant, this new program that Nellie had caused, the passing of Mike Brennan from the legislature. Dan would have to drop him cold in order to elect me. That was sure to bring up the Creedon affair again. Brennan and Creedon would match cases and choose the lesser of two loaves. In other words, for the support of Dan, Brennan was willing to throw over Creedon. But Creedon and his influence with the other party was the next best thing to having Dan. It naturally followed that Brennan and Creedon were sure to get together. And Creedon hated Dan as much as I loved him.

With Brennan on our side, Creedon was tied hand and foot. With Brennan thrown out in the cold and allied with Creedon, the district would probably drop back into the days of fist-fight elections and there would be plenty for the Dan Rafferty Voters League to worry about. I did not know how much Brennan knew about the League and the way it was supported but I could see that if my own wife was against it, Brennan could do a lot of shouting to the voters that would cause trouble.

However, I was ready to follow Dan's lead. I guessed that he knew what he was doing and if he did not know, at least he could plan it out. It certainly was no time for me to come to the front with a lot of third grade suggestions. Dan had seen fit to promise Nellie something. That was O. K. with

me. As long as my connection with Dan remained solid, I was willing to do anything.

I got no chance to talk with Dan about it until the evening had passed and he was going home. Then I told Nellie to get to bed and rest while I took Dan home in the car. I planned on that for a chance to learn a little more about Dan's plans, both for Brennan and for me. I wanted to get him alone to see just what his reaction to Nellie really was.

I found out quick enough. Just as soon as we were out in the street and Dan had a fresh cigar burning, he half turned toward me and said:

"Eddie, can you beat a woman? Can you even tie a woman? . . . I have known a thousan' of 'em that oughta been beaten! . . ." He laughed at that and I knew he did not really mean it but was just licked when it came to figuring out what a woman would do next.

"They do some funny things, all right," I admitted. "I suppose you're thinking of Nellie. . . ."

"Sure. I never figgered her just that way. . . . I think it's just the time an' the situation that has got her head full o' nutty notions, Eddie."

"She stumps me," I admitted. "Honest, Dan, I been living right on the edge of nervous prostration for the last two weeks."

"I knew you was worried," Dan grunted. I

glanced at him and he was in one of his brown studies; one of those moods he had when he did not seem to hear if you spoke to him. I have seen him get them even in Rourke's place with a party going on around him.

I just kept quiet, much as I wanted to talk. I drove slowly hoping that he would rouse out and talk to me before I got him home. Finally he did. He suddenly puffed at his cigar and found that it had gone out. He fumbled for a match but I showed him the mechanical lighter on the dash and he used that. It seemed to interest him a lot, that lighter. I guess he did not know they had such things on the newer cars. Anyway, it roused him to speech again.

"I almost have to laugh, Eddie," he grinned, "at the way you an' me pan Nellie for her queer an' dumb ideas. Honest I do. Right while we're doin' it, I have to realize the diff'rence there is in you since you married her. . . . Ever stop to think o' that?"

"Difference, Dan?" I asked. "Well . . . I suppose every man changes when he starts staying home nights instead of batting around with the boys. . . . "

"Bunk to that!" Dan rumbled. "That ain't the change I mean." His big hands dropped onto his knees and I could see them in the dim light of the

dash. The fingers were playing a sort of tune against the tops of his shin bones. That meant he was set to talk . . . even argue.

"Nellie's turned in," I suggested, "what say to a little ride around the park?"

"I was just goin' to suggest it, Eddie. We oughta have a little talk. I don't want to git off'n that subject about Nellie. We gotta watch our step there. She's smarter'n we think."

"She's smart, all right. . . . Quiet about it, too."

"All the smart ones are," Dan mumbled. "But I was just sayin': You don't realize the change there is in you since you got married. . . . The way you talk, Eddie! Just a short time ago you was full of 'dese an' dose an' dem'. . . . Now you talk like a guy what never had seen a cleanin' floor. She done that."

"Sure she did. . . . Sometimes she gets my goat correcting me. . . ."

"I guess she would, at that," Dan muttered. "But it won't last long. She's right an' she knows both of you know it. Her big happiness, I guess, is makin' a better man outa you."

"I ain't so sure, Dan," I said slowly. It is funny the way a man will just stumble into great truths. I did then . . . and I mentioned it just like it was nothing at all. "I ain't so sure," I said, "that her

really biggest happiness don't come from making a better man of me . . . and making me believe I did it myself!"

"If she was here," Dan grinned, "she'd trample hell outa that 'ain't', too!" We both laughed.

We came to a red traffic light at the park entrance and I stopped the car. "Go ahead," Dan snapped, "crash the light. If there's a cop aroun' at all it'll be Riley."

Riley was there all right. He blew his whistle at us and came over to the car boiling mad and set to bawl somebody out plenty. He saw us and grinned.

"Hello, Riley," Dan boomed at him. "Sure, if a man didn't break the traffic laws now an' then none o' his friends in the department ever would speak to him!"

"How's Mr. Rafferty?" Riley grinned. "Hello, Eddie. . . . You gents oughta git department numbers on your car, then we wouldn't be stoppin' you. It's so har'rud to see at night. . . ."

"We suspect a little girl up in the orphan asylum o' bein' a burglar," Dan grinned, "an' we're hurryin' up there to git her before she kills somebody." We all laughed and Riley waved us on. Dan was like that.

"About Nellie," he said when we were going through the park. "What you just said is deep

stuff. All good women are that way. They want their man big, but they hate to think anybody else had to make 'im that way. That'll change when this kid comes bouncin' into her life. She'll pay more attention to him then, than to you. They all do. We gotta plan on that."

"What'll we do about this legislature thing?" I asked. "She'll be expectin' that, Dan."

"Oh, sure. . . . I guess you'll just have to go for one term. You don't mind it, do you? You're doin' it fer her!"

"No. I don't mind, Dan. It ain't that. . . ."

"What is it?"

"Well, it seems to upset everything, Dan. There's Brennan . . ."

"He's a chump!" Dan scoffed.

"Maybe. . . . But together with Creedon he might cause trouble. . . ."

"You're gittin' an eye to politics, Eddie," Dan grinned. "You got so now that you look ahead an' figger men fer what they really are. Every man's always fer himself. In politics half the battle is puttin' down everybody you meet, fer fear you might want him down two or three years later. . . . You're learnin'."

There seemed nothing to be said about that, though it did please me to see Dan's confidence in me. I just kept quiet and after a time Dan puffed

again, used the mechanical lighter, inspected it carefully while it was red hot, then let it slip back into the socket on the dash.

"Don't worry about Brennan an' Creedon," he said at last. "I'll look out fer them. It's kinda easy, too. I was thinkin' only the other day that I'd arrange with Tanner to git you elected representative of the core makers in their union activities. That would sew up their vote solid an' set us with labor all over the state.

"It ain't much of a job an' Brennan can handle that. That'll clear the way fer you at the capital an' I'll make Brennan believe I'm plannin' to run him fer the senate; or fer Gov'ner on a straight labor ticket, in a year or two. That'll keep him away from Creedon. . . . He'll believe anything, the chump!"

"Fine . . . but will Tanner go for that scheme?"

"Will he? How can he help it? If he don't I'll see that every core maker in the union knows that I wanted to put a real foundryman in the legislature to fight fer better conditions fer them, an' their own leader prevented me fer selfish reasons of his own! What'll Tanner do with that one?"

"Then I'll really make the run an' go to the capital?"

"You bet! I don't like it any better'n you do, Eddie. . . . But women is women. If either o' us failed out on Nellie now, she'd never believe us again. We can't have that. Every man, I don't care who or what he is, needs a woman. They're a lot o' trouble, all right, an' nobody'll ever pound much sense into their heads, but they're nice things to go home to. There's only two things a man can sit in front of a fire with. The other is a dog an' it can't talk or cook."

"Well, whatever you say, Dan," I answered, meaning with reference to the election thing. "I suppose I can go up there an' stick it out for two years. . . ."

"You'll go up there, Eddie," he said, "an' make a couple of speeches that'll convince Nellie that you wouldn't have anythin' whatever to do with a politician because they ain't all exactly honest accordin' to the standards of married stenographers. Then you'll come home an' we'll peddle our fish in the same old way.

"What Nellie needs is a dish of bunk. . . . Reg'lar old Brennan bunk about institutions an' ideals. . . . I know a newspaperman that'll write up the two speeches fer you so's people'll ask if you ain't a minister gone wrong!

"That's what Nellie needs . . . an' that's what she's goin' to git. I guess we can be thankful she

took this queer turn early enough in the game so's it won't make a very great diff'rence. You'll only be outa town a few months outa the year anyway. . . . It's a poor man that can't see both sides o' a question an' give over a bit to the other fellow!" he added in satisfied tone.

"It looks to me," I said slowly, "like about all we'll do is spend two years an' a couple of speeches, kidding Nellie."

"The great American pastime!" Dan boomed gleefully. "Kiddin' the little wife! Why listen here, Eddie. . . . I done it fer near thirty years an' was so happy that it pretty near killed me when she passed away! It's a great thing in a man's life, Eddie, to have one spot where he's always a great man; one human to tell him how great he is."

"I guess you may be right. . . . I certainly have a living to make for her and the baby."

"In ten years she'll raise plenty of hell if there ain't lots of money fer a private school!" Dan avowed. "An' when it comes college time, your name is Mud if there ain't money to send that kid away with. . . . You can decide yourself what to do with that one!"

"Sure," I said, "I've decided already. It's just that Nellie don't understand such things. . . . I was sure of that all along, Dan. That's why

I wanted you out there at the house to-night. I knew you'd straighten things out."

"I never knew a married couple that didn't come across one great diff'rence of opinion," Dan said with the air of a sage. "Never one. An' it's gen'-rally that one diff'rence that busts 'em up. When you come across a little cut like that, put salve on it, I say . . . just salve, an' leave 'er heal." He was laughing through his words but he was mighty sure of himself and I felt that he was dead right.

"The thing that never hurts anybody," he finished up, "is the thing they don't know. . . . It's the same about ghosts!"

I could tell by the way he was laughing that there was nothing wrong with his attitude toward me. I could see that we would go along together even though we followed a different trail than originally planned. That suited me so much that I could have howled with delight. My troubles were over. All I had to do was kid Nellie into believing that things were the way she wanted them, no matter how she wanted them, or how they really were.

If the thought of deceiving her bothered me any, I absorbed it completely in dreams of the life I would give her and the little baby. I hoped it would be a boy. Imagine a little Dan running around!

Imagine, too, old Dan and how he would feel toward the little boy. He had said from the first that the baby was going to be his grandson and what he wouldn't do for a grandson has never been done for a human!

Of course, if it was a girl, that would be all right too. All right except that it meant just that much more kidding for somebody else later on.

"What're you thinkin' about, Eddie?" Dan asked me suddenly.

I laughed: "I was just trying to imagine a little Dan scratchin' up all our mirrors with the diamonds we give him to play with, Dan."

"Well . . . to-morrow we'll get Brennan set," Dan grunted, ". . . also Tanner. There won't be no trouble either way. Then we'll crack open your advance campaign an' get 'em kinda used to thinkin' about votin' fer you next November. . . . In the meantime, practice up on not droppin' your g's an' set yourself so's you won't die laughin' at the idea o' makin' a speech. . . . There's a little sewage scheme you may have to talk about. . . . Now turn around. Look where we are! I'm an old man an' I need my sleep."

"How about going down by way of Rourke's an' dropping in a minute?" I asked.

"Fine. . . . We'll go down there an' knock over a toast to little Dan. Golly, man! I'll be proud

as a peacock in a zoo if that deal comes off! Believe me, I will. . . . What a sweet little woman that Nellie is!

"By the livin' saints, Eddie, you're about the luckiest spalpeen this side of Heaven!"

"I'll say I am," I agreed. "She loves you, too, Dan, Nellie does. It ain't very often that works out, either. Lots of times a wife don't care for her husband's friends. That would be rotten in this case. But Nellie loves you as much as I do."

"She better had, the little rascal!" Dan threatened in mock anger. "You can tell her fer me that the day she don't love her Uncle Dan, the grandfather of her first-born, he'll come around there an' spank her as he would a babe in arms!"

"All right . . . I'll tell her, Dan. She'll be glad to hear it, too."

"There's nobody sweeter'n that child!" Dan said emphatically. "I'm clean nuts over her, Eddie, same as you."

Then we cut out of the park and drove over toward Rourke's place. It was nearly three o'clock in the morning when I finally got home.

CHAPTER XI

"Her eyes were like friendly lights on a troubled sea."

BELIEVE it or not, our baby was born on election day. It never rains, the saying is, it pours. That is true. I never spent such a day in my life. I knew all along that I would be elected because the opposition to me had been run ragged by Dan's machine. Every city employee in our district was out working for me. I had the police and fire departments. Even the postal employees were shouting it up for me and Dan. But I worried just the same.

On top of that along came the baby on election day. But I had no kick coming, at that. The baby was a boy. Before its eyes were open it was named Daniel Rafferty. That was a sure shot. It was born at ten o'clock in the morning and between running from voting booth to hospital, I was a weary candidate from sunup until sunset.

The polls closed at sundown and returns began

to come in within half an hour. The Dan Rafferty Voters League got a big play that night. Our rooms were filled with voters and hangers-on who always appear on election day and look wise. We had a ticker installed and got the news direct from two of the big newspapers. Then we checked them with the election bureau.

There is an air about such a place on such a night. Tobacco smoke from campaign cigars hung heavy in the room. It made your eyes sting, and seared the nostrils that dared breathe deep. Voices were all masculine and there was no little profanity whether the returns showed good or ill.

The barber from the corner of our street was there. He was a pretty nice Italian chap that Dan had picked out for a Committeeman. He ran a big barber shop and made good money. Just because he was an Italian, Dan picked him out to hold the foreign vote.

He was very much excited when the returns came in. The committee for which he was running was one being elected to decide whether the district was to finance partially some new sewage schemes. I never talked with Dan about it but I knew he would be in favor of anything in the line of public improvements, so I suppose that he had the Italian all fixed to vote his way. As far as that goes, Dan

did have him fixed. I found that out later, as you will see.

But election night this Italian was a little of a pest. The way he crowded up to the ticker and howled with delight whenever his name was mentioned made me think he might have been running for Mayor. He ran only in three of the wards in our district. I was being voted on in all of them. Three were a little doubtful for me in spite of Dan's power because Creedon still had influence in them and he certainly was hot after Dan and me.

The first returns we got were from the eleventh ward and I carried that almost solid. Dan grinned in satisfaction and I will admit that I got a big thrill. The second was the ninth ward. I swept that as clean as a sailor's pocket at the end of a shore leave. But they were not doubtful wards. We knew they were won before a vote was cast.

The first of the doubtful wards to come in, however, was cause of a lot of shouting around the rooms. I had carried that, too. It meant certain election and I heaved a sigh of relief when the figures were posted. I thought of Nellie and little Dan, so tiny that he would not know for several years what a voting precinct was. I felt happy and proud for them, and for myself, too.

A hundred men gathered around me to shake my hand and I shook with all of them. I saw that it

meant the end of cleaning floors for me. It was a lot different from eating your lunch on a railroad spur while fifteen languages were being barked all around you.

I was a man of position now. I would be called Honorable. At that thought my mind went again to Nellie and I recalled that she had even mentioned that very thing. It would be good news for her. It would make her happier than ever up there at the hospital.

I found Dan down at one end of the room and he was telling all the boys what a great victory this was. "Not only for the League," I heard him say. "After all, that don't amount to much when you think of what this means. Fellers, this is a victory fer every man who works fer his livin.' It's a win fer the common people an' a wallop at the special privilege boys. Think o' it from that angle an' you begin to realize all it means.

"With this man Eddie up there at the capital to fight the fight of the worker, grafters an' special privilege hounds'll watch their step. Nobody knows this modest little feller any better'n I do. I've watched him come along from the foundry right up to where he is. . . . An' he's goin' higher. We're goin' to put him higher! . . . "

All the boys howled and shouted with glee and pulled me in among them for more hand-shaking

and back slapping. But I finally broke away. I shouted out:

"Thanks, boys, an' I don't need to tell you that every one of you has a friend at the capital. That goes without sayin'. But there's somethin' else that all of you don't know. I want to tell you that right now an' let it explain why I'm breakin' away from you, as I've got to do.

"There's a new Dan Rafferty in the district, fellows! A brand new one. He counts his age in hours. He was born this very mornin' . . . election day, mind you. . . . An' he's my son. . . ."

That brought about a wild scene. Men, half full of Rourke's booze and stupefied by the fumes of campaign cigars, howled out all sorts of toasts to little Dan and to his father. They were still doing that when I sneaked over to the door and beat it away.

I was very tired but also very happy. There is something about being elected to a thing that the best of men fall for. I knew exactly how much I had to do with the election. It was nothing. But I was elected nevertheless, and that was a very decided something.

With those thoughts in my mind and the cries of my first offspring filling my ears, I felt pretty sentimental. I felt warm toward all the world and it seemed to me that some day I might do something

big. Out of it, as I walked toward the elevated to go again to the hospital, came the thought that the kindest and best thing I could have done was what I had done about deceiving Nellie.

It was as Dan had said: She was just a woman and she imagined things. It was wise to let her slip into a fool's paradise because that is where women are happiest. I had Dan's word for that and I had every reason to know the soundness of Dan's logic in all things.

If a woman had a career open to her she would sacrifice everything to it. No husband would stand in her way because she would just step around him. They are the most generous and at the same time the most selfish things alive.

A woman who has no public career open to her, or no business one, naturally likes to reflect the success of her husband. If he is prosperous she wears silks; if he is not she wears cotton. But she would rather wear cotton than have her husband outgrow the degree of success she can reflect.

Therefore I could see no genuine wrong in kidding Nellie into believing what she wanted to believe. In that way she had no chance to hinder my career and there would be plenty of success for her to reflect. That seemed to solve everything. I felt merely that I had two babies to love and care for. Little Dan and Nellie, too.

On the way to the station I picked up an extra edition giving election returns. I got another thrill out of seeing my name listed among the victors. I supposed that Nellie would not be advised of the returns there in the hospital. I hoped not. I wanted to be the one to tell her of that "Honorable."

I read the paper and was surprised, and delighted, to find a little notice in a black-framed box on the second page. It was about me. It said:

"Son Born to Honorable Edward . . ."

Following that there was a brief notice to the effect that I had taken election day seriously in more ways than one and appropriately became a father on the same day I was elected to represent the people of my own district in the legislature. The writer was good enough to say that inasmuch as this was my first public office, the birth of the son was taken as an omen of continued and increasing public service on my part.

They let me in to see Nellie and she looked up at me with all the fine wonderment of new motherhood in her eyes. If I was proud of that election, you should have seen the burning pride and happiness in her eyes!

I couldn't talk much to her. I just dropped down beside the bed and slipped my arms gently around her. She looked pale and drawn. Her eyes were

like friendly lights on a troubled sea. She rubbed my hair with her fingers in that way she had and we kissed each other.

"And a boy!" I muttered to her. "You wanted that as much at I did. . . ."

"Of course I did," she answered. "And his name is Dan . . . Dan, after Uncle Dan. . . ."

Then I knew I had the world by the tail.

I took out the newspaper and folded it so that she could read for herself the box notice I had found. She read it.

Her eyes were dreamy and swimming when she looked up at me. She raised her hand again to my hair and motioned me close to her so that she could kiss me.

"You were elected," she said. "I was sure you would be. If everyone knew you as I do, you'd be President soon, Eddie, dear."

"It was Dan who done it. . . ."

"Did it, honey . . . not 'done it'," she corrected.

". . . Did it," I went on. "Dan and Dan alone. But I'm happier than ever because it is what you wanted. You and little Danny. . . ."

The nurse came and took me away. She did it with a laugh but I knew it was best that I go, much as I hated to do it. On the way out I took a peek at the baby and I don't dare tell you how big

and fine he was because if I start that I'll get you where you will not believe anything I say.

In any event, when I got out of the hospital it was still fairly early and I was altogether too excited to think about sleep. In fact, I had been thinking all the time that I would go over to Dan's house and go over election results with him. There would be a lot to talk over.

Winning of the easy wards meant nothing. The answer to strength or weakness lay in the score piled up in wards that were doubtful; wards where other men were out fighting you and you could measure strength with them. One thing remained in my mind and that was this:

Two of those doubtful wards I might easily have lost. In fact, even Dan had been willing to admit that the other side would carry them. One of these was the first doubtful ward we had heard from and I had not only made a stronger showing than was expected but had actually carried the ward. I had polled more votes than the opposition in their own stronghold. That was very important and very satisfying.

It meant nothing so far as I personally was concerned and I did not fool myself into thinking there was a personal victory to be seen in the vote. What it did was to show that the party was stronger than ever or else I had run on some promise that appealed

very strongly to all the people in the district.

I thought of all these things as I walked along toward the station from the hospital. Certainly there was nothing in my present situation that could be worried over. I was riding the very crest of the wave: Dan happy as a clam; Nellie delighted with the baby and my election; my victory a good, big one, and the future assured. . . . I knew that Dan would have plenty to say when he went over all the figures. He would get angles that nobody else would see or think about.

Back at the League headquarters things were still going fairly strong but a lot of the fellows had finally tired and gone home, or, if they had money, had gone to Rourke's or some such place. Dan was there but already had his hat on to go when I arrived. Of this I was glad because the rooms were a wreck.

The floors were all littered with newspapers and little slips that men had been figuring on. The air was heavy and stale with the odor of cigarette and cigar butts and now and then I could smell the odor of human bodies that have been too long way from water. It was not pleasant right then. I was nervous and tired.

Some of the boys set up a half-hearted howl when I appeared but Dan nipped that in the bud.

"Everybody's tired, fellers," he said. "This has

been a great day fer all o' us . . . but we better call it a day. I know that Eddie is all in. He's worked mighty hard to bring about this fine win fer us an' I know you all want to show how you 'preciate it. But he'll unnerstand without no more demonstrations. I'm goin' to hit the chicken whiskers myself an' I recommend that to everybody. . . . C'mon, Eddie, I'll drop you off at the house."

He took me by the arm and we went downstairs.

"They'll go home as soon as they see there's no more free cigars an' political conversation passed out," Dan said.

There was a taxicab standing on the corner of the street and we climbed into it. Dan sank his big body back on the hard cushion and sighed like wind rattling bamboo.

"Another one over," he said, his voice tired. "The toughest thing about politics, Eddie, is election day."

I laughed right out loud at that. Dan did not seem to realize that all politics meant was election day. Without election day there would be no politics. He glanced at me and grinned. We passed under a street light and I caught sight again of his gold tooth. I certainly loved Dan that night.

"Did you get the returns from those other doubtful wards?" I asked.

"We romped in, Eddie," Dan said. There was a

tone to his voice that made me see that even he could not exactly understand how we did it. "Yes, sir," he continued, "we walked to a win in every ward in the district. In Four, where I thought sure we'd take a licking, you ran twenty per cent stronger than Brennan last election. An' it's his home ward! . . .

"There's some reason fer it, Eddie. Just now I can't quite figger it out. But there's a good reason an' I've got an idea what it is."

"Shoot," I suggested. "I suppose I'll have to meet a lot of people after this an' I better know what road to travel before I do very much talking."

"Yeah . . ." Dan mused. Then: "If you hadn't come back to headquarters I was goin' over to your place to-night. You wanna be careful what you say till we see fer sure just what pulled out the vote fer you. In my own mind I got an idea it's this sewage plan. I think the people want it if it don't run their taxes way up. Gawd knows they need it! We can tell fer sure about that from the vote they pulled fer committeemen to serve on schools and public improvements. . . . I got the figgers here."

We went to Dan's and settled ourselves comfortably in his room. He set out Scotch and water and we rested ourselves and smoked a cigar before we went into the figures he had brought home from headquarters.

It was three o'clock in the morning before Dan was ready to express himself. Then he had the figures to prove that the sewage proposition had been the vote-getter. I had used it in my campaign folders and three times when I had to make speeches which I read very carefully from a paper Dan gave me.

"It's the sewage plan," Dan said at last. "That's what knocked 'em fer a loop, Eddie. An' nothin' could be better fer us. Any public improvement like that is duck soup for a ballyhoo. It'll send you to the capital with an issue to talk about. As long as you got somethin' to fight fer, even if it's wrong, you can win elections."

I was pretty tired and wanted to cut for home but Dan seemed not to know what time or sleep meant. He went downstairs to the telephone and I heard him call up the offices of *The Record*, the biggest newspaper in town.

"I want to talk to Zimmerman," he said, "git him on the phone." He waited a moment, then: "What's that? Busy? . . . What the hell do I care if he's busy? . . . Git him! Tell him Dan Rafferty wants to talk to . . . yes . . . that's right, Dan Rafferty."

After a few seconds: "Zimmerman? . . . This is Dan, Zim. I'm over at my house. C'mon right over." There was another short silence, then Dan,

his voice raised somewhat, said: "That be swizzled! Don't you think I need sleep, too? This is election day. . . . Git over here pronto. Whatcha think I'm payin' you fer, Zimmerman, sleepin'?"

I heard the receiver bang up into the hook and then Dan's heavy step on the stairs. He came into the room smiling and winked at me. "Imagine a guy kickin' fer sleep on election night, Eddie," he grinned. "Here . . . come over here an' have a nightcap with me."

We had a drink together and lit up fresh cigars. I only smoked half of mine because it gagged me and made my head heavy. Finally I laid it down on an ash tray.

"Don't leave that there," Dan said, "it'll smell to high heaven in a few minutes. Heave it out the window."

I opened the window and threw the butt outside. The room was on the front of the house and the street below was deserted. It was a beautiful fall night and the air was fresh and crisp. Overhead the stars were so bright they seemed close enough to touch and though I could not see the moon, its light filled the roofs with a silver glow that made even the shingles stand out by themselves.

No doubt there are such nights every fall; no end of them. But this one got hold of me. It stirred things deep inside me. I could hear Dan moving

around behind me but I paid no attention. The crisp air roused me. I breathed it deep into my lungs and it was like wine. My mind ran back to the hospital. After all, there maybe never had been such a night as this. Little Dan had come into the world just that day. No wonder the stars had to shine so bright. I had been elected to the legislature just that day. No wonder the light of the moon was never clearer or softer. Nellie was doing fine and knew the same happiness I did. No wonder the air was like wine! . . .

A taxicab turned into the street and came to a noisy stop beneath me. A man got out. He was wearing a felt hat all battered in the crown and his coat collar was turned up about his neck. He looked queer as I saw him directly below me. The taxicab looked queer, too. The roof looked a funny shape and the fenders seemed only a few inches apart. Yet I was only on the third story. It is funny how quickly a man's whole perspective can change. It's a matter of habit, I guess.

"Is that Zimmerman?" Dan called to me.

"Yes. He's coming up our steps," I answered.

"Call out an' tell him not to ring," Dan said. "He'll wake up old Chloe."

"Wait a minute," I called out to Zimmerman. "Dan's on his way down to let you in. Don't ring the bell." But he was dumb. He rang it anyway

and I heard Dan growling as he walked down the stairs. Zimmerman kept looking up at me and his face looked sort of silver-colored in the clear night.

"Anything wrong?" he asked.

"Not yet," I grinned. "Wait till the door opens. . . ."

Dan opened the door then. I heard him say: "You ain't got the sense of a baby robin! Why wake the whole neighborhood pullin' at this bell?"

Zimmerman muttered something about the bell not waking anybody that taxicab had left asleep, but I could not hear it all. He stepped inside and the door closed. I took another deep breath of the fresh air, then turned back into the room and closed the window. There was a good suggestion of winter in the air.

I remembered that the doctor had said the best time of year for a baby to be born is fall because that gives them a few months to get their strength before they have to weather a hot summer. You can keep them warm but you cannot cool them off. . . .

Zimmerman and Dan came into the room. Dan said:

"This is Eddie, the new representative. This is Zimmerman, Eddie. . . . Zimmerman of *The Record*. He'll write some stuff fer you as time goes on."

We shook hands and grinned at each other. Zimmerman spotted the bottle and glasses. There were only two glasses. He looked at Dan.

"Which is mine, Dan?" he grinned. Without waiting for an answer he helped himself. Then he rubbed his hands together. "It's right cold out tonight," he said. "First taste of winter I guess. . . . That was a nice run you made down here, Eddie. A nice win, too."

So we got back to politics. "Zim," Dan began, "I want you to write an' print an after-election statement by Eddie. Git it in the mornin' papers all round if you can. Play it up as strong as they'll let you in your own."

"It gets tougher all the time, Dan," Zimmerman said. "That City Editor was born with a blue pencil in each hand and he's practiced with each of 'em every year of the forty he's been runnin' a newspaper. If he gets the idea a strugglin' young reporter might make a nickel for himself, he gets closer than the next drink." As he spoke he helped himself from the bottle again.

"This is news, ain't it?" Dan scowled. "Here's a young man holdin' his first elective position. He wins hands down. He carries the precincts that no other man of his party has ever carried before. . . ."

"Byron swept this clean five years ago, Dan!" Zimmerman interrupted.

"What of it?" Dan boomed. "Who'll remember that far back? Run it anyway. Wrap it up in a nice story about the father winning his first victory at the polls the day the stork brings him his first surprise package. You kin say it was a surprise, too, because it's a boy an' it's already named Daniel Rafferty after me. Two names, both mine. . . . What more do you want fer news?"

Zimmerman had a paper out and was making notes. "Oh, I'll git by with something," he said carelessly. "What does he say?"

"I'll tell you, Zim," Dan went on confidentially. "We want to git over the thought that Eddie is goin' to the capital with a real issue. Fix up a catch phrase if you can. 'Sewage fer the tenements' or somethin' like that. He's a champion o' the poor people, see? He's fightin' to bring them the best the public funds can provide. . . . You know the line. . . . An' play up strong this new sewage system because that's where his votes come from an' that's where his fight is really goin' to be."

Zimmerman was writing. "Is he really going to put up a fight there, or is this the bunk?"

"There's no bunk about it!" Dan exploded. "It's a real issue. Eddie is goin' to fight fer it first, last an' all the time. He is committed to that. . . ."

Zimmerman was glancing at me as he wrote on the folded paper. "Absolutely," I said. "I am

one hundred per cent for this sewage program. The people of the district have got to have it. . . . I intend to see that they get it."

"We get so much of this bunk," Zimmerman said. "I might get over a good story on this if I can go the limit with the Ed.—what with the first election, the baby, and the sewers. . . . Not that there's any connection, understand," he explained to me.

"Play it plenty. I swear it's a fight to the finish for the sewage program," Dan insisted. "Stop an' think a second, Zim: Where did that sewage scheme start? Where did you hear of it first?"

"That big sap Mike Brennan mentioned it last session . . ." Zimmerman said.

"An' what," Dan exploded, "did Brennan ever mention without first bein' told to mention it?"

Zimmerman laughed. I caught a great light right then. The sewage movement had grown around the district for quite a long time and so smoothly had it been done that I never bothered to think where it had come from. Now I saw. So did Zimmerman. It had come from Dan.

"So it's another of your pets, Dan?" Zimmerman asked.

Dan smiled. "Two years ago," he said, "Eddie here would have said to that . . . 'I'll tell the cock-

eyed world!' . . . You can put that down fer me now. You bet this sewage thing is my pet!

"I started it an' I'm goin' to see it through. But give the credit to Eddie here. Make a real story, Zim." Dan pulled out a roll of bills and peeled off a fifty. He handed that to Zimmerman. "Remember . . . a real story. Keep me out an' put Eddie in fer plenty."

Zimmerman grunted. "I guess I got stuff that'll slide by in the rush," he admitted. "I'll try it fer front page stuff on the sentiment of the baby and that line. You won't be disappointed."

"It's me that knows it, Zim," Dan grinned. "See that he makes a fine statement, too."

"If that sewage thing pans out, Dan," Zimmerman said as he reached for his hat, "I figure to get a break here and there, don't I? We've always worked pretty close. . . ."

"If that's so," Dan said slowly, "why worry about this time?"

Zimmerman stuck out his hand and they shook. Then Zimmerman and I shook. Dan went to the front door with him and I opened the window again and got more fresh air. I needed it.

When Dan came back I said to him: "This sewage is the angle for me to play, Dan?"

"Sure," he grinned. "There was no use harpin' on it till we saw how things came along to-day,

Eddie. Now that we got the reins in our own hands, that's the line we got to drive. We got to jam those sewage appropriations down the throats of the rest of the state because there ain't the money here to pay fer 'em."

"They'll be valuable to you, huh?" I asked.

"Plenty," Dan admitted frankly. "An' that ain't all, Eddie. They'll send this kid, an' all your others, through college with colors flyin' if we play our cards right! . . . It's a bit late now. Let's drink to that an' then hit the hay. . . ."

CHAPTER XII

"That'll be when we feather our own little nest."

I WENT to the capital with orders as clear and straight as those with which Dan sent me to interview my old foundry boss for that first five hundred I collected. I knew just what was wanted and Dan had told me the wise way to go about getting it.

"One of the safest an' best things on earth, Eddie," he told me the night before I left town for my first session, "is to ride in on a bigger issue if you can. That's what we want to do. Right now the boys are all steamed up over jamming through that water power development in the northern part of the state. That's the big issue because it'll take twenty millions in appropriations.

"All right . . . at first fight that. Fight it tooth an' nail. Make it appear as though you're up there with the backin' of the organization in this section o' the state an' your first job is to beat that water

power thing. Get 'em worried over you. They've had a tough time of it so far an' they'll play with you a long way before they'll stand for another open fight.

"When you got them worried we can strike a bargain to call you off if they'll throw their entire support to the appropriations we want. That's the racket fer us to work. You go up there an' noise it around plenty among the wise ones that you're goin' to throw this end o' the state into a real mess to beat the water power grab. . . .

"Don't give it to newspapers, o' course. Just to the smart guys around the lobby an' the dumb ones in the legislature. Refuse to be quoted but make it appear you got a real line-up against 'em. An' fer the love o' Mike, don't say you're doin' it to save the people's money or nothin' like that. Tell 'em it's the only way you see to attract any attention to yourself. . . . They'll believe that."

Nellie saw me off and she had the baby in her arms there at the train when I left.

"I'm not unhappy, Eddie, because you are going away. I'm happy and proud of you. I know that you'll not forget Danny and me while you are up there and I want you to know that we'll be thinking of you all the time" . . . She lifted her face and I kissed her good-by. Then she held the baby up and I kissed him. His face was wet; he had been

sucking his thumb, I think. We laughed and I kissed Nellie again.

"I'll do my best, honey," I told her. "After all, it's your own fault that I'm going. You started all this. . . ."

"I did," she interrupted, "and I'm proud of it. Some day this will be quite a nice thing for Danny to talk about. Good-by and God bless you. Don't forget . . . Danny'll talk about the things you are going to do when he gets bigger. . . ."

I gathered that she was trying to make me feel inspired but if she had only known the truth, I guess her ideas would have changed some! I had about as much chance to be inspired to some public service as I had to be appointed Ambassador to the Court of St. James. However, I let it slide. It did no harm for her to think as she wished and she got a lot of happiness out of it.

It took me about two weeks to read the circular letters that were sent to me when the session opened. I got them from everybody that ever had anything to sell and in addition from everybody that ever was interested in any sort of legislation. Most of them were from nuts.

The water power crowd were not slow to reach me. The second night of the session I was invited to "a little party one of the boys is giving." I went. I never saw such style and such spending of money

in my life. There was a regular banquet set up as a "little lunch." There was all any regiment could drink and when we had drunk enough of it, there was entertainment.

Under the spell of that sort of business a man is bound to melt a little. Before the thing was half over everybody was calling me Eddie and I was calling everybody I could remember by his first name. About midnight I noticed that water power got to be the most talked about thing of the evening.

"I been in the legislature for sixteen years," an old-timer said to me, "and in all that time I've never seen a more needed or beneficial measure than this proposed legislation for water power development. I think it a privilege to cast my vote for it and I urge all my friends to throw the weight of their vote and influence in its behalf."

"After which speech," I said to him, "you've earned another drink of the water power medicine. But for me. . . . It's out!

"They've got a serpent at their chests when they bring me in here, brother. This is my first trip up here and I'm a rookie right. But they had better strip me of influence quick because any I got is going into the balance against the very bill you're talkin' about.

"To me, it has the look of a swell grab. Twenty million bucks for the vultures to feed on! It'll be

felt right down to the barrel stove in the Post Office at Squeedunk! That's what it looks like to me an' I deem it as great a privilege to say so, and vote against the bill, as you do to vote for it."

The old man looked at me in mild surprise. Then, with a shrug, he said: "Oh, well. . . . We've each said our bit. Let's have some more of that caviar. We don't often get it as good." That was as far as the thing went with him. But I guessed that a few more drinks under his belt might loosen his tongue. In that case he was pretty sure to spread my line of talk.

Just as soon as that happened I knew I would be on the firing line. The wise ones would size me up carefully and make up their minds just how to operate on me. There were two ways: One was direct and the other was to get me lost in the shuffle when it came to assigning me to committees. I figured they would size me up as a fresh kid and follow the latter course. But I knew they'd learn a thing or two when they started drowning me. Dan Rafferty would show there. He had arranged my appointments very carefully and he had the power to see that I got them. One of them was bound to be very worrisome to the water power bunch so long as I was against them. Dan saw to that.

I proved myself a pretty good guesser all around.

The sixteen-year member got well enough along so that he could not keep our talk to himself. He spread around what I had said and two or three very smart and smooth workers sounded me out. I could almost feel them taking my measure. But they never realized I was taking theirs, too.

Because they did not try to work on me right then, I knew they would attempt to fix the skids for me. After they did that I would hear from them again. Dan had built fences that would wake them up to the presence of a real rebel in the camp.

I soon learned that there is no howl so pitiful as the squawk of a politician who finds someone has outwitted him. That crew had me all set to amount to less than my own page boy . . . then they woke up. They woke up first when I was announced on the powerful Committee on Finances. But they nearly exploded when my name also appeared on the Committee on Public Utilities. The groan they gave threatened to rip the steeple off the capitol. Then they broke all speed records in getting to me with the soft soap.

Knowing that they would make a quick start I got Dan on the telephone as soon as the appointments were announced. The way he chuckled made the receiver rattle in my ear.

"Sit tight, Eddie," he told me. "When they know that they can't reach you direct, they've got to go

somewhere else, see? There's only one place they can come. . . ."

"That's to you," I said.

"You're gittin' smarter," Dan chuckled. "By the way . . . make it very clear to them that you won't play the game for water power under any circumstances. No matter what they say, lay to that. I'll tell you myself when to switch. That'll be when we feather our own little nest."

"I got you, Dan," I agreed. It was a good thing he told me that, too. They tried a lot of tricks later on.

"By the way," Dan chuckled, "I seen Nellie an' the little banshee last night. They're both fine. A bit lonesome, I guess, but no man never lost nothin' by keepin' his wife wantin' him. . . . I'll tell 'em I've talked with you an' you're feelin' fine."

"Do that, Dan," I urged him, "and give them my love."

The afternoon session I never got into at all. I was stopped in the lobby at least a dozen times and finally cornered in a little conference room where I got a terrific load of why I should vote for the water power measure. When I stood pat it was finally made clear that a campaign against me would be made right in my home district and the voters there shown just how I was hindering the progress of the State.

"If I can depend on that, brother," I told the man who threatened, "I'll be everlastingly in your debt. Don't try to tell me that the average voter in my district can say twenty million dollars without thinking there are thieves around! You'll give me the finest little ballyhoo a man ever got if you start that. . . . I'll pay you for such a campaign!"

"You're pretty new up here," one of them growled. "Wiser heads than yours are with us."

"No doubt. A lot of old-timers are with you, too. I beat one of them just last election," I laughed.

"What do you want?" another asked me bluntly.

"I want to beat this bill," I said simply. "I'm going to do it, too. You're none too strong. If I start yelping about a home-town campaign such as you just mentioned, showing up a twenty-million-dollar grab, I'll have every countryman in the legislature backsliding."

"But what's the big idea? It's a good thing, this water power development. It means industries for the state. . . ."

"I don't know whether it's a good thing or not," I snapped. "I don't care much. I'm just out to beat it because that's the only way I can make anybody back home remember who they sent up here."

"Well," a white-haired old lobbyist growled, "there's something in that!"

I did not hear any more about it for three days. Then they came to my room at the hotel and told me they had talked with Dan Rafferty who could make or break me overnight, and he favored the water power bill. They gave me messages that they said came from Dan and I even got a telegram signed by Dan to the effect that he believed in the water power measure and hoped I would vote for it and work for it.

The telegram had me going for a minute, but I made up my mind that Dan never would have sent it. He would have telephoned me.

"You can go back and tell Mr. Rafferty, with my compliments, to jump in the lake," I said. "I'm opposed to the bill, gentlemen. I happen to have committee appointments that will help me to fight the measure, too. You can depend on me to fight it to the last ditch. If I must, I'll finance my own campaign against it.

"I'll carry out your very excellent suggestion and hold meetings all over the state. At those meetings I'll just stand up and bellow 'twenty millions, can your mind grasp this staggering sum? Twenty millions of American dollars. . . .' It won't be necessary to say any more in the rural districts. Just the amount will make you look like crooks!"

I certainly had them going. They swore and they salved me; they tried to bribe me and they threat-

ened to run me out of town. But the facts were there and they could not get around them. Finally they said they would take my message to Dan. They left me. I got Dan on the telephone.

"I never sent no telegram," he chuckled. "You keep right on usin' your bean like that, boy. When I want your song changed I'll tip you off in person. It won't be by letter or telegram, either. It'll be by telephone or I'll come up there. We've got 'em cookin' pretty an' when they're done, I'll drive our little bargain. . . . An' you can bet, too, that there'll be no bargain until I know not alone that the sewage appropriations go through, but also that the contracts for the work come to us."

So I just kept smiling and standing pat for about two weeks. They did not dare bring their water power bill out of committee although they knew that the ways were greased and they could slide it through both houses if they could manage to shut me up.

Though I heard only rumblings, I knew that Dan was working in his own way. I felt very sure that his way would be the right way. So it worked out. Dan had everything completely buttoned up when I got his telephone call.

"All right, Eddie," he said. "The duck soup is finished. You can trot out a speech an' a vote fer the water power measure. But first off, before their bill is reported out, we get a definite appropriation fer

the sewage thing. . . . Also our local committee handles the granting of controls. I've got that all set. . . . You needn't worry none about college fer little Danny!"

"Dan," I said, "where are you talking from?"

"My office. . . ."

"Just hang up and stay there a few minutes. I'm going to call you back on another telephone so I can be sure I've got you. There are some pretty clever people in on this."

I called back and got Dan and everything was all right.

"I'll be up there next Thursday anyway," he said. "That's the day when we get our appropriations through and you make a talk in favor of the water power. That scare of yours about goin' into home districts has spread around town an' half the farmers up there are still afraid to vote one way or the other. You'll have to take the floor an' go on record in favor of the power thing."

"Good," I said. "It'll be better, Dan, if you're here to work with me."

"I'll be there. . . . I'm sendin' Zimmerman up to-morrow to write out a speech fer you, Eddie. I'll talk with him before he sees you."

Zimmerman arrived on schedule. He was wearing the same old battered hat. He came right to my room at the hotel.

"Gee," he complained, "it's getting so a fellow can't walk along the streets of this town without being buttonholed to death."

"You know a lot of people up here?" I asked.

"Listen, Eddie," he grunted, "I've been writing politics for fifteen years. . . . It's got so I don't believe my own mother when she calls me to dinner."

I laughed and he tossed his light topcoat over a divan and shied his hat down on top of it.

"What's this speech you got to make about water power?" he asked.

"I guess Dan gave you the dope, didn't he?"

"Yes," Zimmerman grunted. "Call up and ask them to send me a typewriter, will you? . . . and some paper? Will this be the first time you've taken the floor up here?"

"Yes," I said, "I haven't made a speech yet."

"Well," he grinned, "you'll knock 'em into a tail spin! You've got so you can say 'institution' all right and 'ideals,' haven't you?"

"Great," I said, "I'm full of them. Also 'promulgations,' 'proposed legislations,' 'public betterments' an' whatnot."

"Good," Zimmerman grinned, "I'll throw them all in. I don't suppose you got a drink for a fellow, have you?"

"I'm sorry," I explained, "I haven't. I very seldom use it except when I'm with Dan."

"The only time," he grinned, "you don't need it is when you're with Dan! There's a thousand ideas in a quart of Scotch. I got to have a few of them. Call up downstairs and get some."

"I don't know where to get it. . . ."

Zimmerman interrupted me with a whistle. Then he stepped to the wall phone and asked for the bell captain. "Come on up here a minute, Captain," he said to him. "This is Zimmerman of *The Record*." He was chuckling when he hung up the receiver.

Shortly there was a knock at the door and the bell captain came in. Very abruptly, Zimmerman said: "I want a typewriter and a bottle of Scotch, Captain. Also some plain white paper . . . we don't need any carbon."

"Yes, sir," the captain said. "Do you want a portable or a big machine?" He never even mentioned the Scotch.

"Any kind," Zimmerman told him, "just get it quick. I got to get to work."

The captain saluted and left. Zimmerman walked over to the window and looked down into the street. As he stood there he lit a cigarette and offered me one. I took it.

"I suppose," I said, "that Dan gave you all the dope?"

"All," he admitted, "and then a little bit more. I just feel like writing a speech to-day."

"Dan'll be up himself Thursday," I said.

"I know it. He told me about it. I'm going to stick around until he gets here. There is something about that man Rafferty that gets right to the Governor himself. That's what I'm supposed to be up here for now, a personal interview with the old man. Dan'll get it, too, and it will be a beaut."

There was an air about Zimmerman that I resented; yet I liked him. He was so blunt and abrupt and frank, and seemed so very sure of himself, and of everything he said, that you had to respect him. In addition to that he believed absolutely nothing. No matter what happened it was not half as important to him as his next lunch. He had the whole thing right on his thumb nail and the way he could sneer at officeholders had them all chasing him trying to do him favors. I had read some of the stuff he wrote in *The Record* and it was easy to understand why everybody wanted him as a friend and feared him as an enemy.

He began whistling softly as he stood near the window. After a time he said: "Yep. I just feel like writing a speech. I had a long talk with Dan. He fixed up that sewage situation pretty as a bridal veil. He sure knows his onions, that Rafferty. You remember that wop barber he elected on the committee?"

"I'll say I do," I smiled. "He nearly drove me out of my head last election night."

"Well," Zimmerman said, "Dan's got him hopped up so that he likes his own chances for President next election. He'll do whatever Dan says and Dan is going to say plenty. He's already got it set so that all the contracts come his way. . . . He tells me you did a pretty good job up here yourself. . . ."

Before I got a chance to answer him came a knock at the door. I opened it and it was the captain. He pulled a quart of Scotch from under his coat and handed it to Zimmerman.

"The typewriter and paper will be right up, Mr. Zimmerman," he said.

"What are you getting for this stuff?" Zimmerman asked.

"Well," the captain said, "it sells for ten bucks a bottle. . . ."

"Not here, it don't," Zimmerman answered. "Here's seven thin, American frogskins. Slip the King of the Bootleggers a five and keep two for yourself. . . . Also hustle up that typewriter."

"Very good, sir," the captain said, "and thank you." Then he went out.

Zimmerman hollered after him for a corkscrew and the captain came in again and opened the bottle.

"You better send us up some White Rock and ice," Zimmerman ordered.

"If you don't mind, Mr. Zimmerman," the captain explained, "please call room service for that."

Zimmerman looked at me and I went to the phone and placed the order. He could not wait. He took a drink straight and got a chaser from the bathroom. He coughed a couple of times and cleared his throat. Finally he looked at me and said:

"This is good Scotch, all right, but after three drinks of it if I sat down hard I'd burst into flames."

When the typewriter came he cleared off the little round table in the center of the room and started right to work.

I suppose it is a great gift to be able to write the way Zimmerman can. He just sat down at the typewriter and reeled it right off It took him about half an hour. He did not speak to me all the time he was writing but when he had finished he sorted the pages out and handed them to me.

"Read it over," he growled, "see if you can say that all right."

I read it over and smiled. It was a speech the Governor might have made. I don't know, maybe he wrote some for the Governor.

"Sure," I said, "I can read it all right."

"Didn't that White Rock come?" he wanted to know.

"Yes, it's here. White Rock and ice," I said.

"Well," he grinned, "why not pour off a couple of hot ones?"

I poured two highballs and we clicked glasses over the typewriter and drank through smiles.

"Do you like that speech?" he asked.

"It's a hundred-proof chloroform," I grinned. "If it sounds to everybody else like it reads to me, they ought to toll the church bells when I finish."

He shrugged carelessly. "Just read it off," he explained, "and now and then wave your right arm a little bit. If the occasion seems to warrant it, when you come to that part about the 'ramifications of human progress,' you can hit your desk a belt with your fist."

He made very light of it but I promised myself to read that speech over a good many times before I made it. Also I hoped Dan would get a chance to read it before I took the floor.

The matter of the speech being settled, Zimmerman went to the phone and called the captain again. He told him to come and get the typewriter. They charged him a dollar and a half for the use of it and he never tipped the captain for getting it. The captain did not seem to mind. I guess everybody understood Zimmerman. He had that way about him.

He had another drink for himself and I made up

my mind that he was a journeyman drinker; now that he was away from his duties on *The Record*, he would make a night of it. I could see from the way he talked that he knew the capital all right but he knew the wrong side of it.

"I'm going out and shoot a little cards," he said. "Have you hit any of the gambling joints yet?"

"Yes," I answered carelessly. "But I'm not in the mood for it to-night." The truth was I never had been in one of them and did not know they were around.

"Dan always takes a fling at them," he smiled reminiscently. "I do, too. By the way, speaking of Dan, that was a slick one he slid over on Mike Brennan."

Having taken Brennan's place, I did not want to talk much about that. I just lifted my eyebrows.

"You know," Zimmerman went on, "Brennan was picked as a sort of lobbyist for the Core Makers' Union. Of course that was a bum steer and Dan knew it, but it got rid of Brennan so you could make your run. I don't know whether Brennan got suspicious or whether he's just naturally such a sap that Tanner, of the Union, got sore on him. Anyway, about two weeks ago Tanner brought charges against Brennan at the meeting of the Union. He had enough on Mike so that the Core Makers threw him out.

"Brennan went right to Dan. Everybody knew that before Tanner dared throw Brennan out, he had been to Dan too. That was where he got his orders. Brennan suspected that and he went in and started to bluster to Dan, claiming that he had been framed for you to take his job. He put up a terrible squawk. He lost his head and said Dan was a liar and that he would make him sweat for the frame up he had pulled. When he left Dan he was in rage but I guess he cooled off when he got out on the street and saw the papers."

"Papers?" I asked. "This thing got into the papers?"

"Naturally," Zimmerman sneered, "before Dan ever framed up the fight between Tanner and Brennan, I had a news item all set that put Brennan in such a bad light he didn't dare make any squawk after he was eased out."

"I suppose Dan knows what he's doing," I said thoughtfully, "but that worries me."

"Worries you? What have you got to be worried about?" Zimmerman demanded.

"Well," I answered, "I don't like the possibilities of a Creedon-Brennan combination. . . . Creedon hates Dan; hates him like hell."

"They're both rats," Zimmerman sneered. "What could they do? . . ."

He found out the next morning. So did I. So did Dan. It was some shock, too.

I had spent most of the night reading over the speech Zimmerman had written. I got down late for breakfast and just snatched a newspaper off the lobby stand. It happened to be a local one. I sat down at the breakfast table, placed my order, and while I was waiting for it, opened the newspaper. Here were the headlines:

"POLITICAL BOSS AND LEGISLATOR CHARGED WITH CONSPIRACY BY FORMER REPRESENTATIVE

"DAN RAFFERTY AND PROTÉGÉ CHARGED WITH GRAFT

"Michael Brennan, former representative from the Seventh Assembly District, to-day exploded a bombshell that has shaken the political structure of the entire State. He charges Daniel Rafferty, well-known political boss in one of our largest cities, with conspiracy and bribery to secure appropriations for sewage improvements in his own district. He also claims that Rafferty used political influence to secure contracts for the work to be done. He claims that Edward Blank, who replaced him in the legislature, has been used by Rafferty as a willing puppet for the consummation of his schemes. He offers in support of his claims verbatim telephone conversations between Rafferty and Blank and dictograph evidence secured at various conferences between politicians and legislators.

"'There can be no possibility of doubt,' Brennan says. 'Rafferty and Blank have conspired with other leaders in State politics. The story I have to tell can be told only to the Attorney-General and I shall demand of him that he proceed with criminal prosecution against both these men. . . .'"

There was a lot more. Brennan really had the stuff, too. All that Dan had said over the telephone about me fighting the water power bunch until we got what we wanted, and also got the contracts for what we wanted, was reproduced. To me it was a complete smash case. They had us cold!

I could not eat any breakfast. I made up my mind not to go up to the capitol at all. My knees shook under me and when I hurriedly signed my breakfast check, my hand trembled so that I hardly recognized my own signature.

As I passed through the lobby two or three newspaper men collared me.

"What have you to say, Mr. Blank," I was asked, "in answer to Brennan's charges which appeared in the morning papers?"

"Knowing Brennan," I managed to answer, "I don't see the need of saying anything. It's a cheap political trick to gain publicity."

Suddenly Zimmerman appeared and somehow I was glad of it. "I suppose you would like to say,

too," he sneered, "that you stand absolutely on your record of public service?"

Everybody laughed. Zimmerman continued: "However, you got the right angle on this, Eddie. I'm from Brennan's home town and we know him pretty well. I'm glad he made the charges because it gives us something to write about. But we know as well as you do, they're the bunk."

Just because he was Zimmerman and had a big name as a newspaper man, the others let him take the lead and that got me out of a bad spot.

The motion of the elevator going up made me sick. I got to my room and went in. I went right to the telephone. I never needed Dan Rafferty so much in all my life . . . but it was Nellie I called.

CHAPTER XIII

"One chance to beat this thing, and only one. That's sheer bluff."

I HAD scarcely finished talking with Nellie when there came a rap at the door. I was afraid to answer it and afraid not to. Nellie had helped a lot by saying: "I know why you called. I read it all in the papers this morning. . . . You really needn't have called, dear, because I know perfectly well that it is just as Dan says. You have not ever mixed in things that are wrong . . . and you will not ever. Even little Danny seems to know that. He's so cute, Eddie, I know he misses you as much as I do. . . . He's growing so fast!"

"I . . . I'm mighty glad you understand, Nellie," I answered, "What does Dan say?"

"He says it's simply Brennan trying to cause trouble because he lost that job with the core makers. . . ."

"That's it, dear," I said. "That's exactly it. . . . I appreciate your faith in me. . . ."

She laughed. Said: "Don't be bothered by the thought that I will worry, Eddie. They will not bother me or frighten me no matter what they print. . . . I know my husband."

There was a lot more she said. It all helped.

But this knock on the door; now repeated. Who was it? More newspapermen? Politicians? Police?

"Who's there?" I asked finally.

"Open up, you fathead!"

It was Zimmerman. I was glad to see him. He seemed to have an air about him that just suited such a thing as this. I let him in.

"We'll both take a heavy slug of that Scotch," was his first remark. "I've stopped all incoming calls down at the switchboard. You don't want to talk to people, savvy? There's apt to be a stream of boys from the papers rapping at the door soon. I've told the elevator boy to stop them as much as he can. . . . But I'll just stick around to answer questions in case any of 'em get in."

"Thanks," I said, and meant it. I sank into a chair and waved aside the Scotch he offered.

"Cheer up," he said wryly. "Anybody that got a flash at you now would know you were in a jam that worried you. . . . Put up a front!"

"Dan might call long distance," I said. "Would they stop his call?"

"I'll tell the world they will!" he growled sourly. "Until we find out where Brennan and that rat Creedon listened in, there'll be a great scarcity of telephone calls. . . . And you can now shut up. Before we do any talking I'm going to locate the dictograph they had planted in this room."

"There wasn't any in this room," I said. "If there was, they got nothing over it for I did no talking in this room."

But Zimmerman looked over all the walls, moved the pictures and the furniture and even inspected the edges of the carpet. I knew they had got nothing through the hotel and he soon satisfied himself of that.

"Whoever planted those machines," I cried, "did it down home. Probably they did it in Dan's own office. . . ."

"That's about what they did," Zimmerman agreed. "But you can lay a safe bet on two points: The first is that Dan'll find out all those things, and the second is that the minute he knows them he'll come up here on the hotfoot."

He walked to the window and stood there looking out. He fished out another cigarette and rolled it thoughtfully between his fingers before he lit it and inhaled deeply. The smoke streamed through his nostrils and, when he spoke, it rolled across his lips as though borne by the words he uttered.

"You got to cheer up, Eddie," he warned me. "Honest, you look terrible. I've never handed you any too much credit for backbone, but this is lousy. Get your upper lip straightened out and throw back your shoulders. I'm telling you right now that you've one chance to beat this thing, and only one. That's sheer bluff.

"Right now you'll find Dan walking the streets down home with a smile a mile wide across his pan and looking for a chance to make speeches and laugh hilariously at the futility of the charges against him. Get that straight, boy.

"Pretty soon some of these news-hungry boys are going to crash the gate and come tapping at our door. Get ready for them. . . . Take a couple of hookers."

I knew that he was right and I fought with all my strength to shake off the trembling that seemed to start in my knees and grow upward all over me. They had us cold . . . cold. How could even Dan beat such a thing as this which had come so suddenly just when our plans were all complete and going so well?

Acting on Zimmerman's advice I took two quick drinks and they did bolster me up. I had just finished the second when the door knob turned. It was a spring catch, so the turning was followed by

a knock. Zimmerman looked at me and winked. He whispered: "Take your cue from me."

Then he went to the door and as he walked closer he raised his voice so that whoever was outside could hear: "I think your stand is well taken, Ed," he said. "There is no question but that the state favors and needs this water power development. . . ." He opened the door.

"Hello, Zim," a young man grinned, "I'm from *The Item*. . . . I figured it was a sure shot that Mr. Blank would want to make some answer to these charges of Brennan's. We're holding our presses to give him every chance in the world." As he spoke he slid into the room.

Zimmerman was great. He looked at the fellow a moment, then said:

"Cub, are you? Ed, here, gave out his dope an hour ago!

"He ain't worried about the Brennan thing any, but I'm here myself to get a story on his stand on this water power proposal. If you want that you can sit in. . . . But remember, use it locally. I've got the call on the rest of the state. . . ."

The young fellow looked as though a building had fallen on him. His chin was scraping his watch chain. I laughed the best I could and went over and held out my hand. He took it like it was a transfer. At last he stammered:

"You can't kid me like that, Zim. . . . The lobby is full of boys trying to get up here. . . . I sneaked down a fire escape from the floor above. . . ."

"Well," I grinned, "sneak back up again. This Brennan thing is a dud, of course. . . . A cheap attempt on his part to get some publicity because I ran him out of the legislature. If you want what I've got to say, it's about water power. Either sit down and get it . . . or get out. We don't want to be interrupted. . . ."

"I should think you'd want to answer these charges . . ." he began.

"Hell, man," I exploded, "I haven't even finished reading them! I didn't come up here to argue with Brennan. I came to do something for the people of my district. See Brennan . . . or see Dan Rafferty. I noticed that he was mentioned as well as myself."

I turned, then, to Zimmerman again. I pretended to go right on talking where I had left off. I relied a lot on the speech he had written for me. I said: "But that is my attitude exactly. You will find me steadfastly on the side of state-wide development of our natural resources, so long as that development does not tend toward the monopoly by private capital of those resources, or foster in the commonwealth an undue extravagance to be borne by pos-

terity. I am for sound expansion either in my own community or elsewhere in our state."

Zimmerman nodded and fished paper and pencil out of his pocket. He made a few notes. The reporter looked at us through lids that were closed to slits. Zimmerman started to speak, but the other cut in:

"This is the smoothest racket I ever saw," he snapped. "You two are cooking up something by way of an answer to Brennan and Zim, here, is getting the scoop. I'm in now . . . why not play along with me? It's a cinch you've got an answer. . . . You've got to have! And sooner or later you've got to make it. Why not now?"

"I don't want to offend you," I said, "but I'm a busy man and I'll not listen to drivel like this. You've had an interview. Make the most of it. Say just what I told you: When I can get a chance to read Brennan's charges, I will. Then I'll answer them. I understand they are sensational. Very well. Anything Brennan says for publicity would have to be sensational or there would be no publicity. Isn't that enough for one shot?"

"O. K." he snapped. "One thing more: I've a photographer downstairs. If you'll give me a picture of you here in the room to run with that interview, I'll go my way. . . ."

"Bring him up," Zimmerman snapped. "You'll

get the picture. But let me tell you this. . . . You two come alone or you don't get in.

"It isn't that Eddie objects to giving an interview. . . . He may be kissing you for space later. It's just that right now he's head over heels in this water power plan and he wants no interruption until his position is made clear. As for Brennan . . . take an old-timer's tip, kid. It's the bunk!"

When he had left, Zimmerman turned to me with that wry smile of his and said: "That's that."

"We didn't kid him much," I complained.

"He got an interview. . . . If he'll print it as he got it, we have done ourselves some good."

In fifteen minutes the two were back and I posed for a picture. When they had gone Zimmerman served another drink and I was glad to keep my courage up with the stuff. He stuck right there in the room with me.

"I sent in a story about three o'clock this morning," he told me. "Just as soon as this Brennan thing broke, I got it. I shot in an interview with you; over the wire. I didn't dare call Dan but I knew what he would want and I knew what you ought to say."

"Thanks," I said again. I had a greater faith than I realized in this cynical writer of news.

"It'll cover the stuff back home," he went on. "Also it'll tip off Dan that you're not making any

foolish cracks and that I'm here stringing along with you. . . . The only thing we can do now is wait until Dan gets here. . . . That, and have a bite of lunch."

We ordered lunch served in the room and when the waiter brought in the table and tray there were four notes stuck on it. The waiter apologized, explaining that he could do nothing because his arms were full of tray and the halls were full of men with notes.

I told him not to bother and tore up the notes without reading them. I was hungry because I had eaten no breakfast. The food made me feel better; gave me courage. I began to think harder and straighter.

"When the waiter comes back for the dishes," I told Zimmerman, "we'll have him send up fresh newspapers. . . ."

"I wouldn't do that," he snapped. "That would excite suspicion and give the boys something to say that would make it look like you are more interested than you pretend. No . . . I wouldn't do that. Anyway . . . I know all they can print.

"Boiled down, here's the situation: In some way, Brennan got wise that Dan framed him out of the legislature and also out of that core makers' racket. Of course, as soon as the core makers got wise to the kind of bird Brennan really is, they threw him

out in no time. They're a good bunch, those core makers, and regular fellows. They couldn't stomach Brennan long.

"Then Brennan and Creedon got together, just like you were afraid they might. They matched up and both saw where Dan had spilled them neatly into the cold, cold snow. As a matter of getting square, they cast around for something they could hang on Dan . . . and they just happened to get it!

"Somehow, and only they knew just how, they got a wire into Dan's office and collected all this little scheme we've worked out so pretty. Just as soon as they sensed what they had, they fixed dictographs, tapped telephone wires and got the works. . . ."

"If it came from Dan's office," I swore, "it came through that scaly, old book louse that works in the outer office."

"That might easily be the case," Zimmerman agreed, "but whether it is or not, is unimportant. The fact is, they've got the stuff. Brennan is howling for the Attorney-General. Someone's got to stop him. That someone is Dan. If he fails . . . a swell scandal with jail sentences hangs in the breech."

"They couldn't send us . . ." I began.

"Eddie," Zimmerman sneered, "calm yourself.

They can hang you if you're big enough game! There is no target so easily or so completely shot at as the fallen political idol. The bigger he has been, the harder they shoot and the more often. . . . And don't forget this," he said pointedly, "they've got more than just your gab with Dan. They've got his gab with certain men up here during which he set himself to get the contracts for that sewage work. . . .Oh, it's a hot time in the old town tonight!"

There was nothing very encouraging about Zimmerman, but he was an old stager and from him I got the method of procedure they would have to take against us. First, they would apply to the Attorney-General through whom the prosecution would begin. He would demand evidence. Then they would submit what they had.

This, however, would not get anywhere until after a public hearing which, as a member of the legislature, I had a right to demand.

"That'll be Dan's plan, I guess," Zimmerman explained. "If he can stall along with a hearing he'll have time to build a few fences."

"What good would the hearing do if the evidence calls for prosecution?" I asked.

"Every man in your position has a hearing. There is generally a committee appointed to determine whether or not an investigation should be

made. In the long run, the findings of that committee are what go to the Attorney-General as the evidence on which he can act. If Dan can control that committee, they'll never report adversely. That'll give the Attorney-General an alibi for throwing Brennan out of his office. In that case the whole thing will die . . . until next election."

"To hell with next election," I groaned. "I don't want to come back here anyway. . . . And what if Dan can't control the committee?"

"Then," Zimmerman shrugged, "you'll be taking your meals in your room, but you won't get any notes on the tray and you won't have to be bothered about calling room service."

"Dan'll find some way to fix it," I said, voicing more the hope than the belief.

"He will if anybody can," Zimmerman mumbled.

"It's mighty decent of you to stick with me," I said, "and see that I don't gum up anything. . . . All this stuff is a little new to me. . . ."

"Don't flatter yourself!" Zimmerman grunted. "What you don't know is that I've talked with Dan about this deal half a dozen times in his own office. If they've got what he and I talked about, Eddie, they've got plenty!"

CHAPTER XIV

"That's a hell of a whistle!"

DAN never got to the capital until noon of the Thursday I was to make my water power speech. I thought he was never coming. We were bothered a lot by newspapermen but we let none of them into the room.

"On your way!" I would call over the transom when there came a knock. "I've said all there is to be said and I'm the busiest man in town. . . . Print anything you please. It will mean as much as anything Brennan said."

Zimmerman stuck with me all that time. He sent out for a toothbrush and used a set of my pyjamas. We talked ourselves out while waiting for Dan. In no time at all Zimmerman had finished the quart of Scotch. He wanted more but dared not send for it for fear it would get out and add to the scandal we already had to face. It is amazing how long a man can live in twenty-four hours.

"Dan'll never let you miss that speech," he said repeatedly, "and he'll never let you go on that floor until he's seen you. We'll stick right here."

And he was right. Dan arrived at noon. We heard his booming voice arguing with a bell boy who had been stationed at the end of the hall to keep people from disturbing us.

"Git outa my way, you damned whelp!" I heard him roar. "I know where I'm goin'."

It was not a very pretty speech, but just the sound of that voice encouraged me more than anything which could have happened. I had been tortured by visions of myself in jail and little Danny being cared for by Nellie's mother while Nellie fed them both and kept them in some hovel by working all day herself. Dan's voice was like a ray of hope to the hopeless.

I went to the door and called to him. He stomped down the hall and I was glad to see that he walked like an elephant through reeds. It meant that he was the old fighting Dan and suddenly my sympathies shifted to Brennan and Creedon. Once this thing was over, they had better make tracks clean out of the state!

Dan came in. His eyes were red and bloodshot and he had a stubble of beard on his chin. The cigar that he chewed had a longer wet end than it had dry one. It had never been lit, just chewed

and chewed and chewed. He slammed the door behind him.

"You been great, both o' you," he snapped. "I knew you was together from that interview you shot in yestiddy mornin', Zim. That helped. . . .

"We gotta work fast. Lissen here: There's been a committee rulin.' Three members of the Assembly sit on that committee and weigh the evidence that Brennan has got to offer. If they rule that Eddie here ain't violated any standards o' conduct, then the Attorney-General is bound to throw the case out. He can refuse to prosecute on the findin' of the legislative committee.

"The whole thing rests on the members o' that committee. There ain't any sense kiddin' ourselves. . . . Those rats have got the stuff. That dirty old devil I've been payin' a salary fer ten years, doubled me. They got it all, Zim. Even my talks with you. To make things worse, that wop barber I had elected to the Local Improvement Committee fell for a line of talk from Brennan and made a lot o' fool cracks about me wantin' him on the committee so I would have control!

"The papers ain't anxious to spread it an' I've spent a good deal o' time seein' that they'll soft pedal everythin' they can. That's because the sewage plan is really a good thing and the town needs it. We're well set in that direction. Now the

whole thing is this committee of members of the legislature . . . I'm workin' on that."

"We've got to beat this thing, Dan," I said. "It means jail if we don't. . . . It's bribery and conspiracy. . . ."

"You think you're givin' me any news?" Dan growled. "We'll beat it if it can be beat. . . . An' I think it can. It comes at a lucky time. We got that to be thankful fer, anyway."

"How a lucky time, Dan?" Zimmerman asked.

"The whole gang is scared to death!" Dan cried. "All this water power mob is sittin' right on the edge o' their seats. I've served notice on 'em that any investigation o' Eddie an' myself means that we'll drag the water power proposal in as a part of the scandal an' tie 'em hand an' foot as far as this session is concerned. . . . Mebbe knock the whole thing into a cocked hat forever!"

"That'll help," Zimmerman grunted.

"I got just five minutes to spend with you an' a lot to say," Dan rapped, turning to me. "You go up there this afternoon an' make that water power speech. You got it all right?"

"Right in my pocket, Dan," I said. "I could almost say it without the copy."

"Good! Leave here at two o'clock. Go straight to the chambers and you'll be recognized the minute you rise. Make the speech as Zim wrote it.

Say nothin' at all about this Brennan thing; act like you never heard of it. . . . An' fer the love o' Mike don't let anybody see signs of worry about you. . . . Just as soon as you finish your speech, leave the chamber an' come back here.

"If they corner you, tell 'em that you're just goin' home to read the full text of Brennan's crazy charges an' will answer 'em when you're ready. . . . Got that?"

"Sure, Dan. . . ."

"I'll be nosin' around to see what's bein' done on appointments to that committee. I won't stand fer nobody that I haven't talked to before the appointment is made. It's the water power crowd that has got to fix this to save their own hides."

Without another word he turned, opened the door and went out. Zimmerman looked at me a minute. I was glad to see that a ghost of a smile played about his lips.

"Just a big breath of fresh air, that's what he is," he grinned. "Leave it to him to get the angle . . . the only angle . . . that could win."

I followed Dan's orders to the letter. When I went downstairs the lobby was jammed with reporters and they made a rush for me. Two policemen were there, though, and two men sent by the Speaker who knew that I was scheduled to appear

and would need help to make it. They got me through to a cab.

Just the excitement of the thing carried me through. I kept smiling and nodding and laughing without saying a word. I was in the cab with one of the officers of the House on each side of me before I realized that Zimmerman had slipped away in the crowd.

The speech was easy to make. I had practiced it so much and was so keyed up to it that I had no trouble at all. When I had finished it I dropped back into my seat and there was a lot of applause from the water power bunch. It went over all right and it was a big relief to them to have my position clearly established. After that, they could whip the wary and timid rural members into line without any trouble.

I left the chamber a bit later and a guard showed me a back exit and got me a cab. Nobody expected me back at the hotel so soon so I got to my room without much trouble. Zimmerman was not there. As a result of that, loneliness gripped me. Loneliness and fear.

My imagination ran riot. It painted pictures of myself before a judge and made my ears ring with his sentence. I saw all my success slip away in a fog of dishonor for Nellie and for little Danny.

You may take my word for it that I paid a price there in that room that afternoon.

My head began to throb and it seemed to me that every step in the hall was a whisper of danger. At times perspiration was thick on my forehead. I promised myself a thousand times that this had been my lesson; that, once free of this terrible thing, I never would mix even in legitimate graft again.

I began to realize what Nellie meant when she said that Dan was an older man than I and one with different training. I even went back in memory to what my first boss had said that day after the outing. He had told me I was not smart enough to play this political game and sooner or later it would bring me trouble. He was right.

I planned that, no matter what might happen, I would have a long talk with Dan. If we beat this thing, which I did not think we could do, I was determined to go to him and lay the cards face up on the table. I would tell him that I was all through. I would say that politics was crooked the way he played it, and much as I loved him, I was through. . . .

Those times come, I suppose, in the life of every man. Those hours when events are close to you and you feel the hot breath of real trouble licking at your throat. During them a man rises or falls to

great heights or great depths. I will never know whether I rose or fell. You will have to judge that by what is to come. But I did suffer; suffered intensely. I was really sick, physically as well as mentally. I hated myself because Nellie had faith in me.

Time passed. My thoughts grew worse. When shadows fell across the street below me and the office buildings erupted their cargo of human workers, I looked down upon their hurrying heads with an envy nobody ever will know.

I supposed that each of them had their little worries and fears. But I would gladly have traded with any of them. In fact, and I admitted this to myself, I would that instant have gone back to the cleaning floor and sweated out a day's labor for an honest day's pay.

I smoked all the cigarettes I had and yearned for more but hesitated to send for them because I did not want people to know I was in my room. I was actually afraid of my own voice, I think.

The light from outside was dim. I hated shadows. I lit every light in my room. While I was doing it there came a rap on the door and someone grasped the knob and turned it. For a second my knees shook so that I could hardly stand. Then I fought it off and remembered to bluff.

I puckered up my lips and offered a silly whistle.

When I opened the door, Zimmerman stepped in. His hat looked more battered than ever. He was grinning in cynical and sneering fashion. He sauntered across the room as I shut the door.

"That's a hell of a whistle!" he grinned. "Make it a good one. . . . And order a banquet up here. The committee's appointed and the members are Mr. A., Mr. B. and Mr. C. That's exactly as we want it! . . . Get room service. . . . You might as well call that bell captain, too. Dan'll be droppin' in soon. . . ."

"You mean," I said, my words coming in gasps, "you mean . . . everything is . . . all right?"

"Right as a fiddle! Leave it to Dan. That committee meets next week. In the meantime, nothin' doin'. After they meet, they adjourn. Maybe they'll adjourn a couple of times. . . . In the end . . . no case. We're set, kid. The storm has passed. I just got the word straight from Dan."

I sank down onto the divan. "You call up, Zimmerman," I said, "I . . . can't."

He sauntered over to the telephone, but before he lifted down the receiver he stopped and sneered at me. Then he said: "I never knew Dan to pick 'em wrong. . . . But to me you look like a pretty weak sister."

I never even answered him. Through my mind were running all the thoughts that had crowded it

during that terrible late afternoon. I promised myself that I would talk with Dan if necessary, but I had a feeling that it would not be necessary. Dan himself, I felt, must have seen the handwriting on the wall. He, too, must have learned the lesson so bitterly taught to me.

CHAPTER XV

"I've been through hell to-day."

ZIMMERMAN and I had dinner there in the room. While we were eating, Dan telephoned. I had given instructions to let calls come through and his was not delayed.

"Zim got to you, did he, Eddie?" Dan asked. His voice was husky and sounded tired, but he spoke rapidly.

"Yes. . . . He told me everything is all right. . . ."

"He told you the truth. I'll see you later tonight. Wait up fer me." That was all. Before I got a chance to answer, he had hung up. In his voice there was a certain pride that always showed when he put over a deal.

Zimmerman waited until eleven and when Dan did not come then, he went home. "You can get me at this number if he wants me," he explained.

I waited alone. How I hoped that Dan would

see the light as I saw it. Surely, he would! There never could have been a closer shave than we had just come through and the talk that would follow the ruling of the committee would not be too easy to take. Now, people might well talk behind our backs.

I got to imagining again. I thought of Dan coming in tired and frightened, as I was. I imagined him mentioning the corned beef that Mrs. Brady cooked and the two of us just going quietly back home to my house and having a regular old-time dinner like we used to have.

There would be Nellie and little Danny. . . .

Then Dan came to the door. I heard his step and went to let him in. He was alone. His beard was longer and he had the stump of the same cigar he had been chewing earlier that day. I was sure he had eaten no dinner. He looked tired and I was sorry for him. After what he had saved me from that day, I would have licked the very boots he wore.

"Zim's gone?" he rapped.

"About an hour ago," I said. "He left a number if you want him. . . ."

"I don't want him. . . . That was a good job you did on the speech to-day, Eddie."

"You did a better one," I sighed. "I've been

through hell to-day. . . . You sure everything's all right, Dan?"

"As sure as I am of my own name. . . . It's all set." He stopped, took the chewed cigar from his mouth, looked at it, grinned and dropped it on the carpet. It had never felt the touch of a match. He took a fresh one from his pocket and lit it. "By the way," he said through clouds of smoke, "we got to do somethin' fer Zim up here. His paper's fired him. They got wise that I was slippin' him money an' threw him out of a job. Keep your eyes open fer a spot for him, Eddie."

I nodded.

"An' another thing, Eddie: After I got that committee fixed so's we don't have to worry, I had a talk with Ferkins, the senator from up north. Most of this water power development will go into his district. I made a deal with him to enter some pretty high down State bids so's a company him and I are goin' to form can slip in fer most of the erection contracts. . . ."

I think I gulped out loud because Dan paused, looked up at me in surprise, then said, "What's the matter . . . sick?"

I shook my head no. I could not speak to him.

"Get this now," he went on: "There's certain tricks that we got to pull off in order that Ferkins can do his end of it. I'll fix an organization up

down there an' make you a director. We'll slide in a phoney bid on the stuff Ferkins wants, see?"

He looked at me from his red eyes. His beard was quite long and from chewing that cigar it was stained about the lips. I gulped again. I wanted to speak for Nellie and the kid. . . . But he was looking at me.

"All right, Dan," I said. "All right. . . ."

CHAPTER XVI

"What the hell's Nellie comin' up here for?"

I SUPPOSE anybody can get the right slant on things by looking backward. No great intelligence is required to learn from what has happened. The difference between a great man and an ordinary one is that the great man can foretell something about what is going to happen and the ordinary one has to depend on what has happened.

I am looking back now and so can understand a great many of the things which followed that last affair at the capital. I can see the great impression that trouble made upon me. I can realize that, happy as Dan thought he was, he really never knew genuine happiness at all. Dan was, and still is, the sort of man who measures happiness by success and recognizes success only as money.

I do not know how he got that way. Maybe some people are just made so. Dan had the knack of looking ahead in money matters but even he did

not look ahead where Nellie was concerned.

Before that final show-down at the capital I always figured that women had a sort of intuition, especially where men were concerned. I had heard big men say that this was true so I accepted it as fact and when Nellie asked questions about things I was sure she did not understand, I laid it to her intuition and bluffed my way through.

She never told me she did not believe my answers to her questions and after little Dan appeared and Nellie was a mother, I figured her bothersome questions would end.

For a time it was just like Dan said when he sent me to the legislature. He looked ahead that time and knew that when Nellie had a baby, she would not worry so much about me. She would just take things for the baby and believe I was as honest and upright as she herself was. A woman is changed by a baby. A man just works harder.

All this seemed very true even when I talked with Nellie from my room at the hotel before Dan had fixed things. She told me then she knew I was honest and no matter what anybody said, she never would believe anything else. Then, I remember, she started to tell me how little Dan was growing. While she talked with me on the telephone she could see him sucking his thumb and to

her that was more important than the investigation that was driving me crazy.

So when I got her telegram while Dan was still in the room there, I did not know what to make of it.

"Who's that from?" Dan demanded, his fingers rubbing the stubble of beard and his gold tooth glistening as he twisted his cheeks.

I opened the telegram and read it.

"It's from Nellie," I told him. "She gets here in the morning."

I was more than surprised by the message but I did not have much time to think about it before Dan was firing questions my way.

"Nellie?" he demanded. "What the hell's Nellie comin' up here for?"

"I don't know," I said. "Here, read the wire yourself."

Dan read it and while he read his forehead wrinkled more and he bit hard on his fresh cigar. The telegram did not say anything except that Nellie would arrive on the morning train.

"She's in a damn' big hurry to get here," Dan growled. He stood up then and walked back and forth across the room. I could tell he was uncertain in his mind.

"I talked with her on the telephone," I explained. "Maybe she was worried about that."

"What'd you say to her?" Dan demanded angrily.

"Nothing. Nothing at all, Dan, that could do any harm."

"Say, listen," Dan growled at me, "I never seen a guy that could do the harm you can. Just with a twitch of your lip you can start a full-grown revolution!"

Dan was very tired and upset so I did not mind. He paced across the room two or three times more, then he crumpled the telegram in his big hand and turned to me just as though all of our trouble was my fault.

"Somebody's got to that dame," he rasped. "Somebody's got to her, understand? An' they've filled her full of hop. She's on her way up here to raise hell, just like that night over at your house."

"No, she ain't," I objected. "How could she do that, Dan? Right over the telephone she told me that no matter what anybody said, she'd always have confidence in me. . . ."

"Yeah," Dan growled. He took to pacing again. Then: "But she didn't say nothin' about me. That girl thinks I'm a big, black spider livin' in a web of crooked politics. She thinks everythin' honorable an' clean is just a fly for my web."

He kept on walking up and down as was his habit and he puffed hard on his cigar. Smoke filled

the room and hung in streaks which writhed about his shoulders and head as he walked.

"No, she don't, Dan. She don't think that," I answered. I was worried again that maybe Dan and I would have to bust up and I would start for that cleaning floor.

Maybe I got a little mad at Nellie again. Here I was doing my best for her and the kid and just when things were hottest she was always bobbing up with some new kind of trouble. It seemed to me then that sooner or later Nellie was sure to bust up me and Dan. After all, she was only a girl and how could she know what that would mean?

The trouble was, she was a hard-headed girl and would not listen to reason. You could not tell her things. In a way, she was just like I am: She could not look ahead. She did not realize things until they happened and then it was too late to mend them.

I sat down on the divan and you can believe me, I felt pretty low. What with Dan refusing to learn from the trouble we had just got through and Nellie coming up at a time when all she could accomplish was more trouble, the world seemed knocked into a cocked hat.

For quite a time Dan just walked the room and puffed at his cigar. Then he grabbed a chair and swung it around in front of me. He seated himself

and leaned forward, resting his elbows on his knees and pounding one fist into the palm of his other hand. His eyes looked red and the tobacco stains in the corner of his mouth were unpleasant. He leaned so close that I felt his hot breath on my face and, once, smoke from his cigar got into my eyes and burned there.

"You listen to me, you damn' chump," he began. Then he turned and took the cigar out of his mouth and spit on the rug. He would not have done that at home. I just waited.

Dan stuck the cigar back in his mouth and faced me again.

"Get this an' get it straight. That dame of yours is on her way up here to raise plenty of hell. Somebody's filled her full of this investigation an' that somebody couldn't be nobody but Brennan. It's the last shot he could fire an' he sure picked a bull's-eye."

"Well," I said, "gee, Dan . . . what are we goin' to do?"

"That's it," Dan exploded. "That 'we' covers everything. If I could deal with her myself I'd handle it damn' quick. But she don't believe nothin' I say. You're the one that's got to do the talkin'. An' I'd rather send in an orang-outang, or even just a little hand-organ monkey, 'cause anyhow they could do what you tell 'em."

"Haven't I always done what you told me, Dan?" I asked. "Why do you keep pickin' on me?"

Dan got up again and his big shoulders gave a shrug of disgust. He walked over to the window and looked down onto the buildings below us.

"What time's that train get in?" he asked after a while.

"It's due at eight forty-three," I answered.

"Well," Dan growled, "we're both goin' to meet it, understand? You an' I'll be there. I'll take a room here at the hotel with a sittin' room adjoinin'. We'll get Nellie off the train an' have breakfast served in the sittin' room."

"All right, Dan," I said, "all right."

"An' listen to me," Dan rasped, his hands pounding together again. "You take your cues from me durin' that breakfast. All you are is the lovin' husband an' fond daddy. You give her the big, wholesome, outdoor kiss when she gets off that rattler. Then be damn' sure to stand behind her an' push her chair under her when she sits down to breakfast. . . . Pretend you're so happy to see her you can't even eat.

"An' every time she starts talkin' politics or business, you shy her off an' tell her how pretty she is, or what a nice dress she's got on, or don't her hair look swell, or mebbe you're goin' to give her a present. Anyway, tell her somethin'. An' be god-

dam sure you don't say nothin' till you get a cue from me! Have you got that straight?"

I had it straight all right and I said so, but in my mind I was thinking that every man ought to run his own wife and Dan should go a little easier about running mine. Without another word Dan strode across the room to the door and opened it and stepped into the hall. There he paused a minute and glared back at me.

"Why the hell do we have to have women anyway?" he demanded, like that was my fault, too. Then: "You be at that train," he said, and walked away leaving the door open.

I went over and shut the door and locked it. Then I sat down again on the divan and tried to think. But it was no use. Hours afterwards I got undressed and filled the tub with cold water. When I put one foot in, though, it was too cold, so I did not take a bath. I just went across the room and stretched out on the bed.

After a while I got a little sleepy so I got up and went to the telephone to leave a call for seven o'clock. In that way I would be sure not to be late for the train, and beside that I would have time to get a little breakfast first, because it looked like I would not have much time to eat while I was telling Nellie all those things Dan had said.

CHAPTER XVII

"Your politics, Dan. You are a grafter."

YOU have got to hand it to Dan in some ways. He met me next morning on the platform just before the train pulled in. His eyes were bright and clear. His cheeks were smooth shaven and they looked almost pink. He appeared like a man who had never lost an hour's sleep. His clothes were pressed and he wore his hat at a jaunty angle on his head.

"Mornin', Eddie," he greeted me, his big hand covering mine in a clasp that hurt. "By Golly, this is a red letter day, eh, boy? I wonder if Nellie's ever been to the Capital before?"

I was so surprised that I could not think of anything to say before Dan was talking again.

"I'll bet you'll be glad to see her," he went on. "Bless her heart! Just as soon's she gets up there to breakfast I'll call the Governor an' see to it that she gets a chance to meet him. We'll have to show

her through the Capitol, too, an' mebbe around the city, huh?"

"Yeah," I said. "Yeah, we'll have to do that, Dan."

"Well, we'll make them plans later. First we'll have that breakfast. That'll give us time to plan the day."

Everything seemed kind of hazy to me when the train pulled in. I did not know what arrangements Nellie had made about somebody to care for little Dan down home. During the night that had worried me. Anything that would make Nellie leave that baby must be something mighty important to Nellie. So I half ran up and down trying to see which Pullman car Nellie would get off.

I was plenty surprised when I saw her. The porter helped her off the train. Then I saw a red cap pick up the bag she had carried on our honeymoon. Even though I was afraid to see her, I got a big thrill out of it.

"There she is, Dan," I cried, "down there!"

I started out to run, leaving it to Dan to follow as he chose. Nellie was standing there beside the red cap and she had little Dan in her arms. She smiled when she saw me coming, but even at that time I saw there was something different about her face.

I put my arms around her and kissed her and she laughed nervously and said:

"Take the baby, Eddie. Careful, now. For goodness sake, don't drop him."

She laid little Dan in my arms and I looked down through the blankets that were wrapped about him. He was wide awake. His eyes were big as dollars and blue as summer skies. Not only that, he was sucking his thumb; and there is something about that. All I wanted to do was strut.

"Well, well, well!" I heard Dan say behind me.

Nellie and I turned to meet him. His arms were outstretched and there was nothing for Nellie to do but go to them. He wound them around her and swayed her back and forth there on the platform and made her kiss him two or three times, so that even Nellie, no matter what was in her mind, had to be pleased and happy.

"An' now let me see that little shaver o' mine," Dan demanded.

He released Nellie with one hand and his big fingers hooked over the blankets about little Dan's face. He looked down.

"Well, I'll be damned," he said. "I will be damned! Now, ain't that a baby for the gods?"

Just at that moment little Dan's thumb slipped out of his mouth and he waved it around trying to get it back in. When his mouth worked it looked

like he was smiling. Dan threw back his head and shouted with laughter so that everybody looked at us.

Nellie stepped around the suitcase and fixed the blankets about the baby's head. She did not change them any; she just fixed them.

"You must not let him suck his thumb like that, Eddie," she told me. "It will change the shape of his mouth. I've been putting bitters on his thumb but he doesn't seem to notice them. . . . I've got to find something . . ."

Dan was chuckling hilariously and suddenly his big arms took little Dan out of mine.

"Sure," he said, "you two kids don't know nothin' about babies! This is my boy, understand? Little Dan Rafferty Blank. That's who he is, an' it takes a man to be carryin' him."

"For goodness sake, be careful!" Nellie urged in worried tones. "You'll have to put your hand under his back, Dan. . . . You have to support him. . . ."

The blankets had fallen off the baby and were hanging almost to Dan's knees so Nellie paused to fix them and show Dan just how he must carry the youngster. Then we started off down the platform and Dan was laughing and chuckling and nobody got a chance to say much but him.

Outside the station we got a taxicab and Dan

made a big fuss about sitting just so and holding the baby just right. Nellie watched every move he made but I could tell there was something wrong; badly wrong. Nellie was not herself. Her lips, which were usually sweet and smiling, were set in a straight line across her face and there was a light in her eyes which always came there when her mind was made up.

As we drove to the hotel I reached over and caught her hand and kissed it two or three times, then held it in mine. She smiled at me but it was not Nellie smiling.

Dan had a swell room at the hotel and when we got there the table was all set for breakfast. Two waiters were there ready and Dan made a big show of ordering expensive things and demanding that Nellie have more and more of them. It was just as though Dan never had been as glad to see anybody before. But all the time Nellie was quiet. She just answered yes or no and fussed around over the baby.

It was while she was fixing little Dan on the bed and propping him in pillows so he could not roll off, that a big bunch of flowers was delivered at the room. Dan presented them to her and put his arm around her and kissed her again.

"It's high time you were comin' up here," he told her then, "high time."

Nellie straightened and looked at Dan.

"I had to come this time," she said quietly.

"You bet," Dan answered. "You bet you did. An' now that you're here you're goin' to be the guest of the State. You're goin' to lunch with the Governor, that's what you're goin' to do. Then we'll show you all through the public buildin's an' in the afternoon there'll be a car here, an' we'll ride around for two or three hours so that you won't miss a thing."

He patted her on the shoulder and turned away.

"It's nine o'clock or after," he said. "I'll be able to get to the Governor. I'll call him right now an' tell him that luncheon has got to come off. . . ." He strode toward the telephone but Nellie stopped him.

"Wait, Dan," she said. "Don't call the Governor."

Her eyes were shining and even while she spoke her jaw seemed set.

"I'm not up here for a good time, Dan," she explained steadily. "I'm up here to know the exact truth about you and Eddie in this last investigation."

Dan paused and turned to look at her. His chin was set, too, and I knew the end between us was near. But I was waiting for something like this

and I was ready. I laughed, stepped over to Nellie and put my arms around her.

"Woman's place," I said jokingly, "is in the home. Just 'cause I'm in politics, did I have to marry a suffragette?" I was doing my best to laugh naturally.

Nellie did not resist me but she remained rigid in my arms and I knew I was not getting anywhere.

"Imagine Nellie a suffragette!" Dan boomed, his voice trailing off in laughter. He turned again toward the telephone.

"Don't get the Governor, Dan," Nellie insisted quietly. "I will not lunch with him if you do."

Dan turned angrily. I felt Nellie wilting in my arms, but it was not a gesture of weakness. It seemed more one of hopelessness.

"I see you are going to fight me," she said quietly. "Well, be that as it may . . ."

"Say," Dan half bellowed, "what do you mean, fight you? D'you think I spend my life fightin' women? What the hell's got under your skin anyway?"

Nellie pushed me gently aside. "You know what bothers me, Dan," she said quietly.

Little Dan was stretched out on the bed beside her and she had dropped the flowers there, too. She stood, now, before them and somehow it came to me that here was the oldest story of all; a mother pro-

tecting her child. It just seemed to work out that way. Maybe it was my own guilty conscience.

"Nobody never knows what's botherin' a woman," Dan trumpeted. "Are you tired from the train ride? Nervous, upset, headache?"

He spread his big hands in a hopeless gesture. "Do you always feel rotten an' grouchy before breakfast? Will you be different after you eat?"

Nellie was very quiet and I knew Dan was being too rough, but I did not forget my cues.

"Gee, sweetheart," I said, "I can't make up my mind even now which is the prettiest, you or the flowers or little Dan." I went to her to take her in my arms again, but she put both her hands against my chest and very gently held me away from her. She cleared her throat and wet her lips several times, then she said just as steadily as a talking machine:

"That is one of the things you will have to decide to-day, Eddie. I know you love me. You know I love you." She wet her lips again and paused and just the tone of her voice left Dan and me without words. I tried to speak but she put her soft finger across my lips and looked up at me.

"You will decide to-day, Eddie," she said definitely, "whether you will be the father of little Dan and a husband to me, or whether you will continue in crooked politics with Dan Rafferty!"

I heard Dan gulp and then he said something which should be said only in Sunday Schools.

But Nellie and I paid him no attention. I was looking into Nellie's eyes and I knew right then that I was going to be her husband just as long as she would have me whether or not I ever spoke to Dan Rafferty again in my life.

Nellie was looking into my eyes, too, and whether it is that intuition I was talking about, or whether women are apt to know more than you think they do, I cannot say. But I knew that I did not have to tell Nellie my choice. She saw that choice in my eyes, and in hers I found proof of it. Somehow I felt happy and easier of mind and did not care if I went back to that cleaning floor.

But not Dan. He came up to us, his big shoulders swinging in that way of his. He was so big that he had to look down on us and, without any reason, I got my arm around Nellie. For the first time in my life, I guess, I kind of faced Dan.

"What d'you mean," he demanded, "by crooked politics?"

"Rafferty politics," Nellie shot back at him. "Your politics, Dan. You are a grafter. And you've just about made a grafter of Eddie. It stops right now."

Dan went white, then red, and his fists clenched. He chewed the inside of his lips until it made my

teeth ache. His eyes narrowed and he stared so steadily at Nellie that I glanced at her. She was so small there beside her baby that I was afraid for her. Then I caught the light in her own eyes and my sympathy switched to Dan.

"That's gratitude," Dan said through a snarling laugh. "By God, that's gratitude for anybody!"

"I buried your old man 'cause he didn't have a dollar; I fed your own mother when she had nothin' to eat; I bought the first crib you ever had an' kept a roof over you both while you got an education on my money!

"When you grow old enough to marry, I let you pick out the man you want, then I lift him outa the sweat of his overalls, present you with a house to live in, an' put him in a place where he can take care of it. For those few little considerations you call me a crook an' a grafter. That, by God, is gratitude!"

Nellie stood her ground but her cheeks were the color of the counterpane on the bed. I could hardly get my breath because I knew this was the end. It just had to be the end.

Dan whirled on me then. "Well, what are you standin' there for?" he demanded. "Can't you think of nothin' to say? I can think of plenty, myself, but I won't bother sayin' it. That is, I won't except this. . . ." He turned around and raising

one huge hand, pointed a trembling finger at little Dan lying so quiet and happy there on the bed beside the flowers.

"If this ungrateful little wench poured into that kid's hide any of her own blood," he roared, "then the kid ain't worthy of the name of Dan Rafferty an' you'd better change it. If he runs true to the form of his mother, he'll eat an' drink you dry till he's old enough to go on his own; then he'll steal your savin's an' start out. A damn' sight better off he'd be if he was a foundlin' in an orphan asylum. . . ."

There is no telling what Dan might have said, because his face was like a prairie fire and his voice was shaking with rage. But there came an interruption.

The waiter had arrived with breakfast and he knocked on the door. Dan controlled himself; stopped short. Nellie sank down onto the edge of the bed beside little Dan. Her hand reached out and stroked the blankets that still wrapped the baby. She raised her eyes to big Dan and said very slowly and softly so that the waiter could not hear:

"I'll gladly change his name, Dan. . . . He can't be named after a thief."

The waiter knocked again and I threw the door open before Dan had a chance to answer. I had to admire the way he handled himself for the next five

minutes. Unless he got it from me, I don't believe the waiter sensed that anything was wrong.

Dan saw that Nellie's chair was placed at the head of the table where she would be most comfortable. He saw to it that her coffee and rolls were hot and her orange juice cold. He criticized the waiter because her eggs had been served under glass instead of in a portable oven and finally, when the table was laid and the waiter gone, he turned sneeringly to Nellie and said:

"Sit down, sweet woman, and eat. Eat a lot, because I've already paid the check."

Then he caught up his hat and before I could do a thing he had walked out of the room and was gone.

Nellie sat perfectly quiet on the edge of the bed, one of her hands still stroking little Dan's blankets and the other resting on her knee. I knew her fingers were working because I could see her skirt move. But she did not say anything. She just sat there, white and tired, and raised her eyes to look at me.

I do not know how I felt, all I can tell you is what I did. I stood quite still looking at Nellie for several minutes and then, from the blankets behind her, little Dan made a sucking, chortling noise and I knew he had lost his thumb. Nellie turned toward him and moved his hand down away from

his mouth and there was something in that gesture that was finer to me than all the success Dan Rafferty ever had. Nellie did it unconsciously but it seemed wonderful to me.

I walked over to her and she smiled at me so I dropped down on my knees beside her and put my head in her lap and for a long time I could feel her soft fingers stroking my hair and my ear, and the flowers on the bed beside us just lay there untouched while the wonderful breakfast grew cold. In fact, nobody ever ate it.

CHAPTER XVIII

"The way to beat a woman is not with strength. It is with weakness."

NELLIE and I did not have a chance to talk until that night. We just could not bring ourselves to talk. We saw nothing of Dan that day and did not hear from him. I had to go to the capitol during the afternoon and up there a senator told me that Dan had returned home. I just nodded as though I knew all about Dan's plans, but that evening I told Nellie what I had heard and that made it possible for us to talk.

After all, this is a story of Dan Rafferty and not of me or of Nellie except as we contacted with Rafferty. For this reason I will not tell of that evening with Nellie except to say that we reached an agreement between us and I was ready enough to return to the cleaning floor at the foundry if I could not get anything better to do when my term at the capital was ended. But I wanted to stick to Dan and my story about him:

I saw or heard absolutely nothing of him for three weeks. Nellie returned home to wait for me and I attended the sessions. But most of the time I did not cast a vote and in committee meetings I was more than careful to say and do nothing.

Sometimes I wondered if Dan might not frame me up because I would be in the way of his schemes. It was a mighty uncomfortable time for me. I guess, in fact, it was the worst time I have ever spent. Nellie has told me since that during it, I turned gray. If Dan had only said or done something, even if it was only in anger, I would have felt better off.

When I did finally hear from him, the message scared me. It was a telegram and it stated curtly that Dan would expect to see me at my home the evening of the following day.

I called Nellie on the telephone right away. She said she had heard nothing from Dan, but I had better come home and be there. So I did.

I arrived in the morning and though Nellie and I tried to cheer each other up during that long day, I do not think either of us was very successful. There was no telling what a man like Dan might do. I was afraid that Dan in his own astute way had made plans that would ruin me completely. My only hope was that, outside of living on a lower scale, Nellie would not suffer. But time and again

she told me that poverty held no terror for her. We just sat around most of that day telling each other how firm we would stand against Dan and politics generally.

Dan arrived at the house a little after eight. On Nellie's instructions I had the deed to the place there to turn back to Dan and we planned to leave the furniture and everything else so that just as soon as things were settled, we could take rooms somewhere and I could hunt up a job.

But Dan was not angry when he came in, though. His shoulders were just as big and his voice just as heavy. He walked in the same old way, but somehow or other he looked a little more like he did that time when his wife died. I met him at the door and he grinned at me sheepishly and held out his hand.

"Hello, Dan," I said. "I'm awfully sorry about it all."

We shook hands. Nellie met us in the living room and she just stood quiet there and looked at us. Dan shied his hat across the room onto the divan and hung his head a little and smiled.

"Ain't you even goin' to . . . shake hands, Nellie?" he asked.

Nellie took a step toward him and held out her hand. Dan caught it and pulled her into his arms and kissed her. I was surprised as could be. He

held her close to him, pressed her head down against his chest so that he could kiss her hair. As he held her thus, he said:

"I'm gettin' old, Nellie, an' I've had a hard life. Can't an old man have his mistakes to himself?"

How could you take a man like that? What could we do with Dan? Neither of us could think of a thing to say but finally Nellie pulled away from him and moved his favorite chair around and Dan dropped into it and crossed his legs. He fished for a cigar and looked at Nellie.

"It's a long time since I've been here," he said, "but I didn't think you would forget my ash tray."

Nellie went into the dining room and got the ash tray. I sank onto the divan and I could not have said anything if ten words would have bought me a gold mine.

As Nellie set the tray beside him, Dan said:

"A man gets so he talks too much as he grows older. I didn't mean what I said up in the hotel. . . . You ain't changed the kid's name yet, have you?"

Nellie's lips were trembling so she just shook her head negatively.

"It's all been a great lesson to me," Dan went on.

"I'm the kind of a man who finds it hard to apologize, but I been doin' a lot of thinkin'. Mebbe I'm just a big roughneck an' mebbe my idea of politics ain't what yours is, Nellie."

He paused there long enough to light the cigar, then he blew a big smoke cloud and went on:

"But I ain't so bad. . . . I take politics as I find it. . . . I've always tried to be square an' decent."

Dan had me almost crying. He had always been so big and strong and sure of himself with men, that it left me half goofy to see him here belittling himself before a soft little woman. Nellie, too, was finding it hard to listen. She wet her lips repeatedly and once or twice glanced at me. But I could not help. In truth, I guess I am just not the helpful kind of a man.

But Dan did not need help. He looked up at Nellie and smiled and said:

"Listen, colleen. Will you believe your Uncle Dan if he tells you somethin' on his word of honor?" He paused a second but before Nellie could answer, said:

"If I swear to God, little girl, that what I say is true, will you believe me?"

"Yes," Nellie answered quickly. "Yes, Dan, I will believe you that way."

"And you can, too," Dan returned. "I've got

a place for Eddie. It ain't in politics, either. He'll run the insurance business. He'll be the head of it an' in a few years it'll be his business. I give you my word of honor I won't never have him in politics in any way. . . . Eddie'll be good in the insurance business 'cause he's a nice kid even if he is dumb. He'll work hard an' the customers always did like him.

"I won't even use him as a director in dummy corporations. I'll just keep my name on the door an' Eddie can be the active boss down there. I'll pay him a good salary an' if you like it better, he can even buy the business away from me on what it earns, though I'd a damn' sight rather pay him a salary an' then split the profits fifty-fifty above that."

I looked at Nellie and started nodding my head yes, because the insurance business would do well by us. Then I learned another great lesson. You can take it from me that the way to beat a woman is not with strength. It is with weakness.

All Dan's bellowing and power had never got an eighth of an inch with Nellie but now that he was sitting there in that chair pleading for something and telling how weak he was, he knocked poor Nellie into a loop. She slipped an arm around his neck and kissed him on the head.

"Of course Eddie can run the insurance business," I heard her say. "You must not say all these terrible things about yourself, Dan. You just followed your own light. . . . Maybe I'm a little too finicky about such things . . . but little Dan and all that . . ."

Dan pulled her down onto his knee and she sat there just like a little girl and put her head on his shoulder. Dan looked around her at me.

"Does it hit you all right, Eddie?" he wanted to know.

"You bet it does," I answered instantly. "You just bet it does! Next to Nellie and the baby, I love you better than all the rest of the world, and I want you to know that. You've been so generous to us. . . ." I was kind of choking so I cut it short. "Still are so generous, Dan."

"Sure," said Dan laughingly, "the only reason I'm doin' it is so I can keep close to me the only family I got. The only kids I love. . . ."

I will swear his eyes were misty with tears but he laughed through them and grunted and finished: "An' so I can still come here for my corn beef and cabbage!"

So that is the way it was settled and that is what I am doing. We live in the same house and Dan, of course, is still in politics. But I never hear anything about them.

Personally, I have always believed that Dan meant every word he said that evening at our home. He put me in here to run the insurance business because he loved Nellie and little Dan. Yes, and me, too. But there are others who think different.

For instance, Dan broke with the Mayor before the next election and when the campaign was at its height and everybody knew that the Mayor was likely to be beaten just because he had broken with Dan, I met him on the street. He looked at me and shook his head wisely.

"I always figured you," he said, "as kind of a mug. In the early days I never could see why Dan had such confidence in you. But when all is said and done, you're the smartest of the bunch."

"I don't see why," I answered.

"Well," Tom grunted, "I'll tell you why. Out of everybody that ever played politics with Dan Rafferty, you're the only one that beat the game! First you got yourself set with him in this town. Then you went to the legislature for a term and got yourself kind of a name. And while you were up there you got enough on Rafferty so that he had to take care of you in some way. So he hands you a sweet and profitable insurance business." He laughed cynically then and finished: "You can

take it from me, that's the sweetest score anybody ever got out of Dan Rafferty, even if you did have to blackmail him into it!"

At first it made me pretty mad but I kept my head and decided I would not say anything to Nellie about it. Why upset her? She would not understand it anyway.

THE END

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